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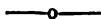
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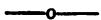
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SERMON FOR THE NEW YEAR.



Isaiah lvi. 12.—“ *To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*”



If we have ever occupied some elevated and commanding position, we must have observed that the scenery, at a great remove from us, far surpassed in beauty that which was directly under the eye. The spot we descried far off in the mighty distance, was of all others the most interesting ; and we have sometimes thought that could we but reach that spot, we might settle down with perfect content, because there we should find none of those anxieties and discomforts which mar almost every scene in which we mingle.

We are all aware that there is deception here, and we explain it upon this simple principle, that in the distant perspective we really perceive only an outline, which our imagination fills up and adorns. I allude to this as an experience with which, perhaps, we are all perfectly familiar. Now I do not lay an interdict upon this play of human fancy, or say that it is wrong ever to allow the mind to follow it, and to be amused with its beautiful delineations. I would not condemn the indulgence of imagination any more than the exercise of memory or of judgment ; a day dream may be very pleasant, and the most fanciful reveries can never harm us, if they do not affect us improperly towards sober realities. But, should the tendency of such visionary enchantments be to disgust us with the objects around us, and make us dissatisfied with the circumstances amid which Providence has called us to move ; should they indispose us toward the duties of our present station, or lead

us lightly to estimate, if not utterly to neglect the advantages which belong to it, then imagination becomes the master, instead of the servant, and the sooner its spell is broken the better for our interest as well as our judgment. How idle, how ruinous is it to everything like peace of mind, to be perpetually sighing after the fancied beauties of some distant, and perhaps, inaccessible habitation, and thus to become indifferent to the realities and dissatisfied with the comforts of one's actual home !

It must be evident to everyone, that what is thus true of *space*, is equally true of *time*. The coloring which fancy throws over the distant scenery of nature is no more beautiful, nor captivating, than that which hope throws over the perspective of the future. How apt we are to live amid coming scenes ! How constantly do we find ourselves forming our calculations, and laying out our plans for futurity, and rejoicing, by anticipation, in pleasures we have yet to reach ;—thus are we perpetually peopling with images of our own creation the worlds in which we expect to dwell. “To-morrow,” we think, “shall be better than to-day.” The scenes before us are brighter than any which are past or present ; the results yet to be evolved grander and richer than any which have been developed ; the enjoyments expected more intense and permanent than any we have hitherto experienced. Thus we make up the deficiencies of the present, by the anticipations of the future ; our enjoyment to-day is owing to the vision of to-morrow ; our happiness is the creature of our expectations, and hope gives us fortitude for endurance, and energy for action.

We would carry you to-day in pursuit of our general object, amid some of the walks of ordinary life over which you have already travelled, and where yet we find you. We enter the scenes of earthly business, and we hear from many lips the utterance of complaint, and we see many signs of dissatisfaction, if we are not compelled to listen to the sighs of a deep and bitter disappointment. But a short

time since, in these same circles, everything was different. There were joyous faces and sanguine hopes. Borne high by hope on the wave of prosperous experiment, no one feared the mountain billow which might overwhelm him, or dreaded the hidden rock upon which his proud barque might strike, and be dashed to pieces. But we come to him now and ask him how the event compares with his previous confidence? Where are his plans and enterprises now,—those wondrous plans which were certainly to evolve such happy results, and upon which his heart was set so strongly? The foundation upon which he stood, perhaps, has gone; he feels that his confidence has deceived him. Is there to be found in the world a human being who ever rightly anticipated the changes which have actually taken place in his own personal history? Is there one, let his powers of calculation, and skill in management be ever so great, the course of whose affairs has been in accordance with his preconceived views? The most sagacious statesman, the most wily politician, the man of clearest and far-reaching fore cast, has been utterly disappointed, no less than the man of the weakest intellect. And what does it all mean? How are we to explain the unexpected changes which constantly take place, the disappointments which so often try and even break the human spirit? Are they mere fortuities, the results of accident or lawless chance, furnishing no salutary or impressive lesson for the human mind to study? This is entirely too atheistical. No! there is a God, who reigneth in the earth, and he has been moving unseen amid the elements around us, controlling and regulating all things. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, nor a hair from our heads, without his notice, nor without design. And the movements which are constantly taking place, defeated plans, blasted hopes, withering, crushing disappointments, are but the rebukes which the God of Providence is administering to the spirit which so constantly controls us, as it whispers in our ear, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and yet more abundant."

Thus a man finds himself in very different circumstances from those in which he expected to be ; the place of his residence is not where he thought it should be ; his character, perhaps, is the very opposite to that which he intended to form. He means to be honorable by emulating the course of one who had gone before him, and who had reached the highest point of earthly distinction ; and yet, how it happens he cannot tell, he is astonished and broken-hearted as he sees others pass by him in the race, and seize upon the objects on which he had fixed his eye, and which he fondly hoped ere long to reach. He means to be rich, and plans accordingly, and yet he finds himself struggling onward with a bare subsistence, and perhaps not even securing that, while another, of far less sagacity in planning, and less energy in execution, whose prospects were not so flattering as his own, amasses the fortune which he expected to gather, and rides by him in all the pomp and pride of gilded splendor. Whatever may be his end or whatever his measures to reach it, he thinks the world is full of good, and moves forward without suspicion and without fear ; but he very soon finds that it is not always a friend who looks pleasantly upon him ; that the smile of apparent approval is not an evidence of good will, and that professions may be falsified, and promises broken as easily as made. To be dependent upon others is to be friendless ; to need assistance is to be almost sure of its refusal. Oh ! how different is all this from his wishes, his plans, his hopes ! Thus are the darling schemes and fondest anticipations frustrated, as time rolls on and evolves events. Sagacity contrives, patience matures, industry laboriously executes, and disappointment smiles at the fabric which has been so curiously reared and so beautifully adorned, and at the moment its completion is expected, the stern hand of reality sweeps the whole away, or leaves only the ruins to tell of its former existence. Scarcely different is the result in those cases where the issue of our course is in exact accordance with our previous

plans. Success crowns our efforts, we reach the point we had in view, we seize the object at which we grasped, and yet we are creatures of disappointment. We thought that if we could attain a particular spot, or gain a particular object, or put ourselves in a particular position, we should need nothing more to fill up our cup of joy. We have amassed our gold, we have reached our eminence, we have secured our fame, we have built up our reputation, yet neither wealth, nor position, nor fame, is what we expected to find it. We are depressed in the midst of our joy, disappointed in the midst of our success; we are as far removed from happiness as ever; and we sicken and pine in view of the proofs which our own experience is furnishing of the vanity of human confidences.

We pass then from the natural to the spiritual, and seek there also for illustrations. It is one of the common places of human thought, that the scenes of the present have an intimate connexion with those of a future world. We are passing onward through a day of probation to the hour of retribution, and the realities of eternity. The fact here stated, makes, generally speaking, but a feeble impression, and yet there are times when it takes a deep and strong hold upon the mind, and awakens the most painful emotions. No thought can be more dreadful than that of an eternity unprovided for. A sense of hopelessness ascertained, is so dreadful, so unnatural, so crushing, that not one of us could endure it unrelieved a single hour. And yet there are but few, if, indeed, any, who consider themselves in every respect prepared for an exchange of worlds! The most spiritually-minded and devoted Christian finds, upon an examination of his heart, that there is something he wishes to do, some attainment he must make, some duty he must perform, before he can consider himself prepared for his last account; and he is often calculating with a good degree of confidence, upon making that attainment and discharging that duty before he shall hear his summons to the judgment seat.

It is worse than this with the man out of the kingdom of God. What can be more terrible than a hopeless death? From what does the mind shrink more instinctively than the thought of putting one's head upon a dying pillow, without an interest in Jesus Christ, and sinking into one's last sleep, without any comforting presage of the future? Unconverted men will bear me witness that they do not wish to die as they are, and enter upon a scene of eternal realities. Nothing is more distinct to their apprehension than their entire unfitness for such a wondrous transition; and an alteration in their character and position is embraced among the most confident of their hopes. They have more than once given promises to this effect, and have, perhaps, most deliberately formed their plans, and matured their purposes. They intend to be Christians before they die. They overlook present advantages, neglect present duties, treat with stolid indifference the obligations of to-day, under the delusive pretence, that they may be better done to-morrow!

Ah! I need not say, that the close of this year may find some among you in the cold damp tomb! Can you believe this, and yet be unconcerned about the eternal world? We cannot point out the day, the month, the year, when your earthly course will end; but we know that it is approaching; and judging by the past, we have no ground to conclude that the present will be a year of exemption from the sentence "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." We do not know when it shall be. God be thanked that we do not! We cannot tell when any one of us shall step upon another scene. We know only that any of us may soon do so, at any time and in any place. Where is the dread threshold of the court of our eternal Judge? Anywhere: everywhere: some of us will cross it this year. That point will not be questioned by any who put confidence in the revelations which the experience of the past furnishes; and if it is so—if it is certain that some of you must die this

year—you will not, you cannot, be guilty of the madness of throwing upon the future the work of your repentance; while God calls upon you to make your calling and election sure, you will not answer “To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” To-morrow! that voice may not be heard. To-morrow! see those poisoning scales in which your destinies are placed, and that hand just ready to strike the balance! See that opening grave—it has been dug for you; and on that spot, where shortly you shall lie, stands the long suffering Son of God, holding back the destroying angel, while He pleads with you and for you; you cannot be deaf to His entreaty “Come, sinner, hark, O! haste away, while yet a pardoning God is found.” And while you listen, there is another voice, how solemn its message, how startling its tones! It is the voice of One who moves amid the tombs; and as He points to the graves, where lie the wrecks of once manly forms, the decaying tenements of once promising and procrastinating, but now ruined spirits, He says, “Thus will I do unto thee, and because I will thus do unto thee, prepare to meet thy God.” Listen to it, ye young, ye middle aged, and ye old—listen to it—for ye are yet here. The summons has not yet gone forth for any of us—the stroke is not yet descending—the weaver’s shuttle is yet playing—the eagle has not yet descended upon his prey—ye are in a world of hope—God waits to be gracious. Oh! ye who have been approached solemnly—who have been warned faithfully—who have waited long—ye who have met every argument, every entreaty, every appeal, with this same reply, “To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.” See the great destroyer coming with your names written in his commission—and while you tremble at the summons he is about to utter, betake yourselves quickly to your closets, and there pour out your prayer, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

ON CIRCUMCISION.

Gal. vi. 15.—“*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*”

IN the beginning of Christianity, an unhappy dispute prevailed between the Jewish and Gentile converts, concerning the obligation of the Law of Moses. Though many of the former heartily received the Christian Revelation, and believed Jesus to be the Messiah whom their Prophets had foretold; they yet retained the peculiarities of their old religion, and strove hard to oblige the Gentile converts to submit also to them, as equally necessary to salvation with Christianity itself. The Gentile Christians thought this an intolerable burden; and could not see the necessity of their becoming Jews, in order to their being Christians. St. Paul became their advocate; and the dispute being referred to the Apostles at Jerusalem, was determined in their favour. This determination encouraged the Gentile converts in their opposition to Judaism, and confirmed their Christian liberty; but it did not entirely silence the Jews, nor remove their prejudices. They had been long in the habit of considering themselves the favourites of heaven, and had no notion of God's shewing mercy to the rest of the world, unless they were by circumcision incorporated into their nation, and submitted to their Law. The first preachers of the gospel were Jews, and were also tainted with the same prejudice. Finding many of their countrymen settled in the larger cities of the Roman Empire, they first made known to them the glad tidings of salvation through Christ; proclaiming Him to be the Messiah, whom God had promised to their fathers. By these means the first converts to Christianity were generally Jews, who, having so fair an opportunity to propagate their own opinions and prejudices, made diligent use of it, to the great disturbance of the Church.

This controversy seems to have been the principal occasion of St. Paul's writing his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. He warmly espoused and pleaded the cause of the Gentiles; proving by many arguments, that circumcision was only a temporary rite intended by God to prepare the Jews, and, by their means, the rest of the world, for the coming of His Son: that all the institutions and ceremonies of that religion were only types and figures of what was to be done by Christ, and in His Church: that these having now been fulfilled, the Law of Moses had answered its purpose, and was at an end; and that there no longer lay any obligation on Jews or Gentiles to observe it. In the management of this controversy, St. Paul was led to extol the glory, and celebrate the excellence of the method of man's redemption by Jesus Christ; and, in comparison with it, to under-value the Law of Moses. Under the word *faith*, he declares the Gospel to be sufficient, without the Law, for salvation; and under the style of the *Law*, he asserts and proves the inefficacy of the institutions of Moses for that purpose. From what he hath said on this subject, in his Epistles in general, and particularly in that to the Galatians, it appears that by the terms circumcision and uncircumcision, he frequently distinguisheth the Jewish nation or Church from the Gentile world. So that the meaning of the text is this, "With respect to a man's becoming a Christian, it is a matter of no importance whether he be a Jew or a Gentile. When a Jew embraceth Christianity, his circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and he is no longer obliged to observe it. And when a Gentile is converted to the Gospel, there is no necessity for him to become a Jew, and bind himself by circumcision to the observance of that Law. If we compare the expression in the text, a *new creature*, with what St. Paul hath said in other places, there will, I apprehend, be no difficulty in assigning its true meaning, nor in understanding it, when pointed out. In another part of his Epistle to the

Galatians he thus expresseth himself, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but *faith which worketh by love.*" Writing to the Corinthians, he saith, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but *the keeping of the commandments of God.*" Compare these passages with the text, and it will be evident that the *new creature*, and *faith which worketh by love*, and the keeping of the commandments of God, all mean the same thing. If then, we can ascertain the meaning of one of those phrases, we shall understand them all. What the commandments of God are, the Bible will inform us; and we all know, that by keeping the commandments is to obey them. Our Saviour hath taught us, that all the Law and Prophets are comprehended in the love of God and man. This lets us into the meaning of the other expression of the Apostle, *faith which worketh by love.* In a Christian sense, faith means the belief of the Gospel. And if our belief of the Gospel work in us love to God and man; in other words, if it produce in us obedience to the commandments of God, which our Saviour saith are fulfilled by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind; and our neighbour as ourselves; then is accomplished what God would have done: *the new creature* is formed; *the new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, is put on. Then are we the children, the beloved, the elect of God. And it matters not whether we are, by birth, Jews or Greeks, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free. Our Saviour makes a distinction between the children of this world and the children of light. The same distinction is kept in view by His Apostles. The children of this world are remarked for their attention to the things of the world: the children of light for their attention to the things of eternity. The former live after the flesh, the latter after the spirit. The former keep on the old man, the latter put on the new man. In the language of Scripture, the old man signifies

the fallen nature of Adam, with all its evil tempers and passions. These we inherit by our descent from him, and not by any imputation of his sin to us by God. They who live according to the appetites and passions of this nature, keep on the old man, with which our natural birth hath, as it were, clothed us. They mind the things of the flesh, and of the world, which things are "enmity against God." They cannot please God, but live in sin, committing many actual transgressions. By *the new man* or *new creature*, is meant the holy nature of Christ, which is love and obedience to God. This nature may be obtained, not by the imputation of what Christ hath done for us, but by having His spirit, and temper, and disposition actually produced in us by the Holy Spirit of God: therefore said St. Paul, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And also, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." For this reason, they who believe the Gospel, so as to be convinced of the fatal tendency of the natural appetites and passions which lead to sin against God; and do renounce and deny them, and are no longer governed by them, are said to have put off the *old man* with his deeds. And they who being convinced of the blessed effect of obeying God in all things, do manifest in their lives, the same spirit, and temper, and disposition which appeared in Christ, copying the example of His holy life, are said to have "put on the *new man*, which after" the image of "God is created in righteousness and true holiness." They, in truth, become *new creatures*; they acquire a new heart, new temper, new desires, a new nature; "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The external circumcision of the flesh gave those who submitted to it, a right to all the civil and religious privileges of their nation. But it will be evident to a careful reader of the Bible, that something more than a compliance with the external rite was necessary to recommend even the Jews to the favour of God. The external

circumcision was a sign of the covenant made with Abraham, but that it had an inward and spiritual meaning, which looked beyond the legal ordinances of the Jews, even to the eternal and immutable Law of righteousness, will appear from the three following particulars.

1. Circumcision implied a ready disposition to learn and obey the will of God. This indeed, is the great lesson which Revelation has ever taught. It was what God required of Adam and of the Jews, and what He now requires of Christians.

2. The spiritual meaning of circumcision required also the withdrawal of the affections from the world, and the placing them upon God. Thus spake Moses to the Israelites, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."

3. Circumcision implied also a strict guard over the sensual appetites. If therefore, the Jew was obliged to love and obey God, to be chaste and pure, and holy, that he might fulfil the spiritual meaning of the Law; how strong must be the obligation on Christians to fulfil the Law of the Gospel! The blessed Redeemer who loved us even to death, hath expressed Himself on the duty of self-denial in terms which ought to make the deepest impression on us. Having sharply rebuked Peter for regarding the things of man; the honour, power, and happiness of the world, more than the things of God; he addressed His disciples, and all who were with Him, in these memorable words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." On another occasion, he said, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." The reason with which He supports this observation is drawn from a principle which seldom fails to influence men in the strongest manner, namely, the natural love of life and happiness. "Whosoever will save his life," by renouncing me, and departing from the purity and holiness of the

Gospel, that he may consult his own ease and worldly prosperity, will find himself miserably mistaken ; he “ shall lose it ; he shall forfeit that life and happiness which is principally worth regarding. But “ whosoever will lose his life,” is willing to forego the happiness of the world, and even to part with his present life, “ for my sake, shall find it :” shall obtain life and happiness eternal.

If what hath been said serves in any degree to impress on you the necessity of that spiritual circumcision, or change of heart and life which is meant by *the new creature* ; and to enforce the obligations you are under to learn and obey the will of God, to love Him with your whole heart, to deny your sensual appetites, by a total abstinence from forbidden pleasures ; what more proper time can there be to begin this work than this day ; when Christ was circumcised, and became obedient to the Law, not for His own sake, but for ours ; that He might fulfil all righteousness, and by obeying perfectly the law of unsinning obedience, might abolish and take it away.

The great point to be ascertained is, whether we are new creatures born again, “ not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Unless this spiritual change passes upon us, neither baptism, nor any other appointed ordinance of religion, will avail to our salvation. We may observe them with exemplary exactitude, and yet be nothing the nearer the kingdom of heaven.

May God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. To that wisdom which is from above, and which seeketh the things which are above ; which will make us wise unto salvation ; which will endure, when days, and weeks, and months, and years are gone ; when time itself shall be no more. That wisdom which will dispose us fervently to seek, and instruct us effectually to obtain, that eternal, incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven for all the faithful servants of God ! To him be glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

NO NEUTRALITY IN RELIGION ADMISSIBLE.

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Matt. xii. 30.—*“He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”*

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THE occasion of these words was this. There was brought unto Christ a man possessed with the devil, who was both blind and dumb ; and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Though the miracle excited the admiration of the people in general, yet it raised the enmity and opposition of the Pharisees, who maliciously charged Him with casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Christ completely refutes the charge, by shewing the absurdity of supposing that Satan should cast out Satan, and act against the interest of his own kingdom for the sake of joining with Him in building up the kingdom of God ! and by shewing the still greater absurdity of supposing that He should act in concert with Satan, whom He knew to be His most malignant and powerful enemy. For He says, “He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

The Saviour was now actually carrying on that great and important design, which always has employed His thoughts, and always will employ them, until it is finally accomplished.

I shall shew, 1st, What design Christ is carrying on ; and 2ndly, That no man can be indifferent towards it.

I. I am to shew what design Christ is carrying on. He never had, and never will have, but one ; and this design was concerted in the council of heaven : the great design of saving sinners ; and this comprises all the works of creation and providence. This is the scriptural representation of Christ's design. As soon as the great deceiver had brought about the apostacy of our first parents, God graciously promised them that the seed of the woman should bruise the

serpent's head. Accordingly, when He appeared on earth, He declared that He was the Son of God, and Saviour of the world; that He came to give His life a ransom for many; and that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

But I go on to shew,

II. That no man can be indifferent towards it. Christ expressly declares, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad," which plainly implies that every man either approves or disapproves His design, and inwardly desires to promote or obstruct it. And that no man can be indifferent towards it will appear, if we consider the following things:

1. The design which Christ is pursuing is the greatest of all possible designs in every point of view. It is great in *origin*. It was concerted in the early days of eternity, by the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and is as great a design as their united and infinite wisdom could form. It is great in *extent*. It reaches to, and comprises all beings and objects in the universe. It is great in *duration*. It began to operate from the beginning of the world, and it will continue to operate to the end of time, and from that period to all eternity; and produces effects the most interesting to every intelligent being, who will always be a spectator of them. Now it is not conceivable that any man should be indifferent towards this great and comprehensive design which Christ is carrying on, and which will deeply and eternally affect the minds of the whole intelligent universe.

2. The great work which Christ is pursuing is totally opposed to all the selfish designs of mankind. Every man is naturally disposed to seek his own things, and pursue his own interests, independently of, and in opposition to, the interests of others. This selfish spirit reigns more or less in the hearts of all the children of men, and leads them to form ten thousand selfish and sinful designs, which they regard as very important to themselves. But the perfectly wise and

benevolent design which Christ is pursuing, opposes and counteracts all these. Their selfish design respects their own good; but His design respects the glory of God. Theirs respects temporal things; but His respects the eternal. Theirs respects nothing but present happiness; His respects holiness as well as happiness, through all the periods of time and all the ages of eternity. So long as Christ lived in obscurity, He grew in favor with God and man. But as soon as He made known His mission, and pursued it in open opposition to the views, the purposes, and selfish interests of the Jews, they hated Him, reviled Him, and opposed Him with the utmost virulence, till they finally imbrued their hands in His blood. And wherever the gospel has made known His object, it has never failed of exciting the enmity and scorn of the wise and unwise, of the learned and unlearned. Mankind never feels indifferent towards any person or object that counteracts and defeats their desires or pursuits. No man, therefore, who is not indifferent to his own temporal and eternal interests, can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is pursuing, and which deeply affect his interests both for time and eternity.

In carrying on His great and comprehensive design, He employs all mankind as instruments in promoting it. Christ has all power in heaven and earth, and is able to subdue all things to Himself, and to cause every creature and object in the world to be instrumental, in some way or other, in effecting the great design He has constantly in view. He employed the winds and waves in His service. He made a fish supply Him with tribute-money. He claimed the right to take from its owner a colt, to ride in triumph to Jerusalem. And after His resurrection, He commanded and commissioned the apostles, and all their successors, to preach the gospel to all nations, to the end of the world. And He still employs the hearts and hands and influence of all other men in His service. He governs supremely and absolutely in the moral, as well as in the natural world, and makes His

enemies, as well as His friends, the active and voluntary agents in doing whatever He sees necessary for them to do, in order to advance His cause and interest in the world.

Mankind cannot, therefore, feel indifferent whether Christ shall succeed or not in His great design, or whether He shall employ them in acting for Him against themselves. Had the builders of the ark known the design of building it was to prepare the way for their own destruction, they would never have struck a stroke, to prepare it for the safety of others and the ruin of themselves. No sinner who understands the design of Christ in the government of the world, can feel indifferent whether the design shall succeed, or whether he shall be an agent in effecting it. Accordingly, we find that whenever and wherever Christ visibly succeeds in building up and enlarging His kingdom, none appear indifferent, but all that are not with Him are against Him, and generally not only feel, but speak and act against Him. Nevertheless, Christ causes them all to promote the very design they hate and mean to oppose. He makes the wrath of man praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He always restrains. Christ has made all nations to serve Him, from the beginning of the world to this day, and will make all nations serve Him from this day to the end of the world, whether they are willing or unwilling to serve Him. And in the view and belief of this truth, no man is, or can be, indifferent to His great design.

IMPROVEMENT.

1st. If none can be indifferent towards the design which Christ is carrying on, then all who do not act for Him act against Him. As all must be for Him or against Him in their hearts, so all must be for Him or against Him in their conduct. So Christ plainly declares in the text. He says, "He that is not with me is against me;" that is, he that is not for me in his heart, is against me in his heart. Again, he says, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad;"

that is, he that is not for me in his life, is against me in his conduct: "he scattereth abroad," and really opposes my design. Thus Christ viewed, represented, and treated such as professed to be with Him, but were destitute of true love to Him.

2ndly. This subject shews the imminent danger of all who are against Christ, and opposing His great and glorious design. They reject the counsel of God against themselves; but that counsel will stand; and if it does stand, it will necessarily destroy all the counsels, and desires, and hopes, and happiness of sinners. Christ himself possesses omnipotent power, and has all created objects and created beings under His absolute control, and can employ them all as instruments to accomplish His eternal purpose. How is it possible, then, that He should be counteracted and defeated in His design? Men may misconstrue and misunderstand particular passages of scripture; but they cannot misconstrue and misunderstand the great design which Christ is pursuing and will certainly accomplish. And if He accomplishes His design, the hopes of the finally impenitent to escape with impunity must perish. If Christ continues to reign, He will make all His incorrigible enemies His footstool, and sink them in endless perdition.

Finally. This subject affords a solid ground of peace and safety to those who are united to Christ in His great and glorious cause. If He succeeds, they are safe. If He promotes His own interests, He will promote theirs. If He is accepted of the Father, they will be accepted of Him. If He is rewarded for all His labours and sufferings, so shall they. If He sits down with the Father on His throne, they shall sit down with Him on His throne. If the glory and blessedness of heaven be eternally rising, they shall eternally rise in glory and blessedness. The gospel which unfolds the nature, extent, and eternal consequences of the accomplishment of Christ's design, opens the most glorious prospects to all the friends and followers of the divine Redeemer. They shall rejoice evermore.

ON THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

Nehemiah viii. 8.—“ *So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.*”

1. The principle which lies at the basis of all preaching, and gives sense and reason to the work of the ministry for the conversion and salvation of men is, that “faith cometh by hearing.” To use truth, men must have the knowledge of it; and truth which lies beyond the reach of human reason to discover, must be communicated to be known; this is the foundation of the injunctions “Go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” “They read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense.”

2. Another principle is, that, for truth to be successfully communicated, the mind of the hearer must be excited to lively attention. No faith cometh where attention is not roused. Men can turn the deaf ear. They can hear and not understand, see and not perceive. The preacher can be as one that hath a pleasant voice, or playeth skillfully on an instrument, and leave no more impression to produce faith or the beginning of holy living, than doth music sweetly breathing along on the zephyr and softly dying away over the distant waters, as twilight is just sinking into the darkness of night. The mind must be roused, for truth to be fully apprehended and become abiding in the soul and effective in the life. Never in fact, does it gain a real lodgement and produce its appropriate fruits, but in the mind highly excited. Probably, the philosophic mind was never more intensely excited than in Newton, when in his garden he was led by the falling apple to urge the piercing investigation deep into nature’s hidden action, and thence to bring out to light the grand laws of her wondrous movements.

And no high and mighty conception of the nobler laws of moral action, of duty, of spiritual excellence, of God, or those of sin, guilt, moral depravity, is ever gained by the listless mind, but only by it burning intensely alive ; and it is absurd in philosophy, as impracticable in fact, to attempt it. It is never expected to bring manhood to adopt a new course, but by exciting attention to it ; nor youth to gain knowledge but by arousing the mind to most lively action. No high attainment of science or art, is expected without enthusiasm. Philosophy, Poetry, Painting, never fear that failure, and waning lustre will be their lot, if only a high and noble excitement can be kept up in their votaries, but religion, holy, heavenly religion, for whose boon the humblest aspirant never seeks in vain,—eternal rewards, sure, certain, in thy right hand, and thy left full of deliverances from bitterest ills, thou must be greeted by mortals in cold indifference ; thy praises heard in icy apathy, thy words received with listless inattention, thy truths carelessly put aside to a more convenient season. And even the minister of thy altar must beware, lest he represent thy claims and thy precious benefits, so as to excite in his own bosom, more than the unspoken hope that some one in still, secret resolve of the heart, not to be uttered aloud, has determined at some time, to attend to thy warning and inviting voice. Not so thought the great Teacher, who kept thousands together for days and nights in desert places, even feeding them by miracle, declaring that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. Not so thought the apostles at Pentecost, or when at the word of Peter, Ananias and Sapphira fell dead, and great fear came on all ; nor Paul, when he preached from house to house, in season and out of season, even continuing his speech until midnight, and talking a long while, even till break of day ; the love of Christ constraining him to judge that, if one died for all, then were all dead, and who said “neither count I my life dear unto me to testify the Gospel of the grace of God,”

that by all means he might save some. Not so thought Luther, Calvin, the reformers, and the puritans, under whose efforts fifties and hundreds were converted at a single sermon. Nor Whitfield, nor Wesley, who often called multitudes at a time to the altar, to confess and resolve at once to give their hearts to Jesus, and cry glory to God; nor the Edwards, Tenants, or Dwight, Strong, Bedell, Summerfield, with hosts of others, now in heaven, by whom most strenuous efforts were made, to excite the careless worldly wicked to think on their ways, and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, to produce that excited attention, necessary for the mind to gain the saving knowledge of the truth. Not so thought Nehemiah and the nobles of Israel, who caused the people to understand, and brought them up to that excitement for religion, by which they "entered into a curse and oath to walk in God's law."

3. A third principle assumed is, that there is a way to lead men to hear effectually, to bring the mind benumbed by worldly influence, error, depravity, superstition, into a state of feeling, solicitude and anxiety, about its immortal interests; so that it shall apprehend the truth, know it, act under it, and find its experimental benefits. Therefore the effort of Nehemiah, to cause the people to understand the reading; therefore the gathering them together, the bringing them to take vows and oaths upon them to walk in the law.

4. Another principle involved in the preaching of the Gospel, and requiring it to be preached, is, that the influence of the Spirit does not supersede the means necessary for the preacher to use, to excite attention for the apprehension of the truth. This influence, essential for conversion, acts but by the truth, the understood truth, truth applied by the mind to its own exigencies, when alive to those exigencies. The Word is the sword of the Spirit says an Apostle. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," prays a world-loving Saviour. Some suppose that the great office of the Spirit in conversion, is to awaken, to

quicken the susceptibilities of the soul, overcome its indifference, and break the fetters with which depravity enshrines it, and thus puts the soul into the open field of free action, unshackled and fitted to allow truth to have its fair and legitimate effects on the mind. Faith cometh by hearing. The soul must act. It must hear, it must attend, it must seek to find, it must stretch forth its withered hand to be healed. The paralytic must rise up and walk, the blind must go and wash ; and in every case specified in Scripture, where by faith a good was to be gained, the soul was required to put forth first the appropriate action. It was not even the office of the Spirit to communicate truth, but to bring to mind what things soever the Great Teacher had told them.

This bringing truth to the mind, is the mighty work. Over what Alpine heights of selfishness, superstition, ignorance, and worldly devotion must it be borne, to be brought to many a mind—through what barriers of error, conceited wisdom, self sufficient virtue, self satisfied greatness, self complacent goodness, must it be made to penetrate ; and to come to many a mind, by what defence of open wickedness, avowed profligacy, hidden enormity, hardened impenitency, reckless casting off of all fear of God, of all desires of goodness, or immortal glory, must it pass to gain an entrance ! Well might an Apostle exclaim, “ who is sufficient for these things ? ” But He that sent out Apostles said, “ Lo I am with you alway to the end of the world.” Assured of this, the faithful preacher who would watch for souls as one that must give an account, pressed in mind by a sense of his obligation to God and his fellow men, having the promise of the Spirit, delights to thrust in the sickle to reap in the harvest of God. “ Woe is me,” he says, “ if I preach not the Gospel ; ” and woe is to sinners if they hear it not ! He becomes the voice of one crying in the wilderness of this world’s desolations of sin, and the multitude go out to hear him. Attention is aroused, excitement opens the mind to

seize on the truth. The aid of the Spirit, certain as the promise of the Saviour to every one who will faithfully sow the truth and water the word, is given, and all men press into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, what if some do not obey, will not give heed, are not led to repent ! Is it better that there should be no excitement, none aroused, but the whole, or almost the whole, go along in indifference and sink at last to death in impenitency ? For this is the issue, if there is any ground on which to justify the angels in calling the Gospel glad tidings for all people, or the Apostles in preaching it in the midst of perils and persecutions, or the Saviour in sending them forth to announce it for the salvation of the world.

5. When it is considered what the Gospel is, that by it the God of the universe addresses a world as sinful, and calls it to repentance with awful threatenings to them who obey it not, as well as invites them to a heaven of glory and eternal rewards, if they will return to duty and love—that in it a Saviour, with bleeding hands, holds out offers of pardon to the guilty, and the crown of life to every penitent believer ; the ground of amazement is, not that there are revivals, but that they are not more frequent ; not that the churches have them, promote them, pray for them, and strive together for them, but that any should oppose or doubt—that any believer of the Gospel should object to them—not that the minister uses language so strong, but that he does not use stronger if possible, to awaken the careless and alarm the sinner in his dangerous course.

I leave these thoughts to your serious reflection, and may the God of all grace begin, carry on, and perfect the work of salvation in all our hearts !

THE RECORD OF ETERNAL LIFE.

I. John, v. 11.—*“And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.”*

THERE is remarkable force in the term here used, “This is the record,” when we connect it with what before had been said. The same thing is alluded to, a few verses before, under the title of a testimony or witness, when it is said, “This is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.” Here, God the Father is represented as giving in His testimony, or as being a witness examined in open court as to the reality of certain claims which are made in behalf of this Son.

Now, in the text, this witness or testimony given by God the Father is represented as written down, and thus a record made of it, which may be used as a permanent kind of evidence to all succeeding generations, precisely as the testimony of a witness put on record, is evidence when the individual who made it is dead, or cannot be reached. The text, therefore, is the recorded, written, permanent testimony of God the Father as to the validity of a claim, that eternal life is in His Son Jesus Christ, and through Him alone to be dispensed.

On any subject which we are anxious to establish by the force of human testimony we in all cases, and by a kind of moral necessity, measure our belief by the number and credibility of the witnesses by whose instrumentality such matters are attempted to be established. If men would act in this simple and natural manner towards the Holy Scriptures, there would not be such a being as an infidel in existence; for if ever there was a matter, the credibility of which could be sustained by the number and moral weight of the witnesses, it is the divine authority of the Scriptures,

and the way of salvation revealed in their pages. Infidelity does, in relation to the religion of Jesus Christ, what it never does and never would dare to do in relation to any other subject, respecting a fact which has the most wonderful accumulation of evidence, arising from the number and credibility of witnesses, of any fact on record. In discussing the all important subject connected with this record, it is necessary to inquire:—

I. What is the eternal life which is represented as given.

II. In what sense is this life which is given in the Son of God.

I. What is the eternal life which is thus represented as given.

Eternal life is sometimes put in direct contrast to extinction of animal existence, and is then merely synonymous with the term immortality. When God created man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He made him a living soul, which expresses an immortality of existence. In this sense, eternal life is given to every creature of God who possesses a rational soul. But there are two perfectly conclusive reasons which show that this is not the eternal life which is intended in the text. In the first place, the phrase does not of itself describe any peculiarity of happiness or woe. Eternal life, that is, perpetuity of existence, is as much an attribute of the damned in hell, as it is of the saints in heaven. They all live for ever, that is, are immortal. But, as a second reason, the eternal life spoken of by the Apostle in the text, is by him confined to a certain class of persons, whom he denominates *us*, by which term believers are to be understood. Mere perpetuity of existence cannot, therefore, be the meaning of eternity; because perpetuity of existence belongs also to those who are unbelievers. This will pave the way for a clear idea. The eternal life which is given, is a life of eternal happiness, as opposed to one of eternal woe. It needs but very few citations from Scripture to prove that

this is the precise meaning of the term. Thus: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Here the contrast is striking, and the idea expressed in a three-fold form, "Eternal life,—they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Again: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." In the description which the Saviour gives of the day of judgment, we have the contrast, and are furnished also with an explanation.

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Here is a contrast between the righteous and the wicked as to the everlasting destiny; and the external life into which the righteous enter, is explained in the verse which records the invitation, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Here the kingdom prepared for them is the eternal life into which they enter, and is given to believers only.

II. This eternal life, or this condition of immortal happiness, is in Jesus Christ.

What does this expression mean? Persons who are in the habit of taking superficial views of Scripture truth, are in danger of misapprehending the completeness of God's scheme. For instance, on a superficial view, it may be supposed, that the expression "eternal life is in His Son Jesus Christ," means no more than that it is in consequence of the mediation of our Lord, sinners receive the benefit of the pardoning mercy, and the sanctifying grace of God. That is unquestionably true; but it stops far short of the meaning of the text. It is a most precious doctrine that the whole mercy of God flows down to sinners through the

mediation of His dear Son. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is the meritorious cause of that justification of the sinner, which not only delivers him from present condemnation and future wrath, but invests him with a title to everlasting life. Hence we are said to live through Him.

But to every individual who seriously reflects upon the perfection of divine truth, there will appear an obvious difference between living through or by means of Christ, and having eternal life in Him. This is the peculiarity of the expression,—not that believers live through Christ merely, but that they have eternal life in Him. A form of expression which is far more intense.

1. Subjects of the kind here specified, are to be decided only by the Scripture; they are beyond the scope of philosophical investigation, inasmuch as they concern matters, which, without a revelation from God, would be entirely inaccessible to the human mind. To go through any process of reasoning, therefore, which is not essentially built upon the basis of Scripture, would be to darken counsel by words without knowledge. I resort alone to the word of God. Our blessed Saviour has made this declaration, “For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. The Apostles take precisely the same view. Thus St. Paul, speaking of the Son or second person of the Trinity in his official character as Head of the Church, writes to the Collossians, “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” And lest there should be any possibility of a mistake as to what he meant by the word *fulness*, he takes special care to explain it in the next chapter. The expression, therefore, that this eternal life is in the Son—means that He is the proprietor of it, that it resides in Him essentially. It is for this reason, I presume, that the remarkable expression is used in the 20th verse, 5th chapter, from which my text is taken, viz.: “This the true God and eternal life.” As if eternal life were so perfectly incorporated in Jesus Christ,

that it might be used as one of His appropriate titles : for the Apostle uses the terms, "True God, and eternal life" as interchangeable. But

2. This eternal life is in Jesus Christ, because it flows to sinners only from Him as the Mediator. As life was in the Son essentially, as well as in the Father, so it was committed to Him especially as Mediator, in order that He might impart it to whomsoever He would. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." He takes this honour to Himself when He says, "I give unto them eternal life." In the very interesting conversation which He held with Martha at the grave of Lazarus, He calls Himself by a title which claims both the possession and the sole power of dispensing life. "I am the resurrection and the life ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

3. Another form of expression for this idea is, that the eternal happiness which is given to those who believe, is deposited in Christ, as a pledge that they shall get it. If it were not so, even a true believer would have no security. Eternal life was given to Adam in paradise, but it was given to him in such a way, that he himself was the guardian of it ; but he lost it. And if it were committed to believers precisely in the same way, such is the fallen condition of man, there is no security that he could preserve it for an hour. He would be robbed of it more speedily than Adam was. To no other being than Jesus Christ could the security of the believer be entrusted ; in no other hands would it be safe. Here alone it is secure. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with a living faith ; trust in Him, repose on Him, live upon Him ; and the eternal life which is promised to those who believe, is placed on a foundation which cannot be shaken. While you cling to Him, not all the power of the earth, not all the malice of the devil can rob you of the gift.

Men who take their opinions as their Gospel, dare to talk of their dependence upon the mercy of God, and will build on one foundation of sand after another, until they lose sight entirely of the only foundation laid in Zion. The mercy of God does not exist towards sinners, except as it is connected with Jesus Christ. What, then, can be more explicit than the language of my text? "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Suppose I tell you of a treatise hid in a particular field; you would scarcely be guilty of the practical absurdity of searching for it in another place, distant and remote. God the Father tells us, and records His testimony, that eternal life is in His Son. Can you find it anywhere but in His Son? And yet, as sinners, you are guilty of the practical absurdity of looking for this in some other place. In the case of a treasure hid in a field, it would be a matter of comparatively little import whether you found it or not. If you choose to waste your time looking for it where it was never said to exist, you would only lose your labour and remain in the same condition. But eternal life being in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone, look for it elsewhere, and you lose—not only time, and strength, and opportunity, but your souls. "For he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Look to it, my beloved brethren, "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Other refuge than the Son of God have you none; refuse that, and you are lost; for how shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation?

BEDELL, D.D.

THE MERCY SEAT.

Exodus xxx. 6.—“*And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.*”

THE Mercy Seat was the covering of the ark of the covenant. At each end of this overshadowing oracle was a cherub of pure and massive gold, stretching out its wings, each toward the other, and forming a sort of throne. There was the visible emblem of the divine presence, and God appeared in the cloud. “There the high priest took of the blood of the bullock of the sin offering,” and sprinkled it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward, seven times. The book of the law was there, protected by the ark of the covenant, and bearing the marks of atoning blood. It was God’s throne of grace, and where the thrilling words were often addressed, “O thou that dwellest between the cherubim :” it was the place of prayer : “There will I meet thee,” says God to Moses, “and I will commune with thee from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony.”

There are men who have questioned the propriety of prayer ; but they are those who, though they need the most are slow to ask. There are those who feel insuperable objections to it ; but they are only the objections of a prayerless heart. There are those who feel strong temptations to neglect it ; but it is because Satan, that great deceiver, is well aware that the man whose home is the mercy seat, is no longer the victim of his delusions. And there are those who have no comfort in it, and therefore restrain prayer before God. Yet is there no duty the Scriptures more explicitly enforce ; no source of consolation which they more abundantly magnify.

Prayer is the language of nature, because it is the language of desire and want, even the “young lions, when they wander for lack of meat, cry unto God.” The veriest

infidel, the vile atheist, in seasons of great public calamity, or personal danger and suffering, forget infidelity and atheism, and pray. Emphatically then it is true of the Christian, that he is a man of prayer ; his own heart will not allow him to live in its neglect. The divine bounty may still deck the earth with verdure, and clothe it with fertility, and he may be a partaker of them, yet is there something within him that constrains him to pray. He has wants which nothing but prayer can supply ; spiritual necessities, which prayers alone can relieve. Just as the plant strikes its roots into the ground to draw thence its vigour and nutriment ; just as the flower opens its bosom to the sunlight and the dew ; so the soul by prayer, has communication with the God of all grace, and places itself under the influence of His love.

The examples of prayer furnished in the Bible are exemplifications of true, sincere, and strong desire. The only rebukes to prayer ever uttered in the sacred volume are against those supplications in which the desires of the soul have no part, and where the most solemn offerings are but "vain oblations." There too are the expressions of its penitence, weeping at the feet of mercy, sorrowing for the past, covering its face, and in prostration of soul before the offended Majesty of heaven, uttering its purposes of new obedience. There are the actings of its confidence, the simplicity of its trust in God, as well as the frequent renewal of that joyful submission to the divine claims which was the turning point in the sinner's progress from darkness to light. There too are the more abundant utterances of his gratitude. A thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies forms no small part of prayer. No man but has much for which to thank his Maker, when he approaches his throne. A sinner has reason for songs of praise as long as he is on earth. Not returning thanks to God, is one great reason why our prayers are not more frequently answered. Christians sometimes pray as though they had nothing to do but weep. We

depreciate not the sighs of a broken and contrite heart, when we say that grief and mourning are not the only emotions which become the mercy seat. There is no fear of our ever being too penitent and humble. There are seasons when the heart is so burdened with a sense of sin, that it can do little else than mourn. But while these things are true, we are not to forget that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, and joy." It is not unfitting in a sinner to call upon God "with joyful lips." The meek and subdued cheerfulness, the holy joy of piety, greatly honour the God of our salvation. If I mistake not, those are the most acceptable offerings, and those the most profitable seasons of prayer, and the most invigorating for duty and trial, when the soul most rejoices in God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But what is prayer? It is not the mere saying of a petition. God who searches the heart has said, that He acknowledges not the worship of the lips. One great reason why the divine presence is so little felt in our devotional exercises is, that our hearts are not in our prayers. Prayer brings the soul of man into contact with his Maker. How unlike that cold, formal, and listless manner in which both those who pray, and those who concur in this service, often draw nigh to the mercy seat. Such is not the worship of the one living and true God. Of all this bowing at the shrines of departed saints, this reverence of the consecrated wafer, and this adoration of the Host, these votive offerings and fervent solemn invocations addressed to the Virgin, this entire machinery of the crucifix, the statues, the paintings, and all the apparatus by which theatrical effect is produced, and the imagination and senses captivated and enslaved, we may well say, "what meaneth this service?" The voice of God demands of all such idolaters, "Who hath required this at your hands?" Prayer is an act of worship, "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for unto *thee* will I pray." God only is omnipresent to see the worshippers and to hear their worship. "The Lord is

nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him ; He will also hear their cry, and will save them."

But if God is the only object of prayer, what is the way of access to him ? Is it through men ? or through the ministration of angels ? or by martyred saints ? or by our own merit and righteousness ? These inquiries suggest solemn and affecting thoughts.

There is "a new and living way into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus." Access to God as the hearer of prayer is the effect only of that great work of redeeming mercy, in which the second person of the ever blessed and adorable Trinity came to seek and save those which were lost, and advance them to the privilege of children. We have nothing of our own to plead ; yet in His name may our prayer go up as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as an acceptable sacrifice. Humbling and prostrating as the consideration is, we have not a thread of righteousness left us, in which we may appear before the throne. The worthiness is not in us. The Saviour's mediation as the atoning, interceding High Priest, forms the channel of all God's communication with apostate men, and the medium of their access to Him. As sinners, we can have nothing to do with God, except through Christ. We have freedom of access only in that way which He has consecrated by His blood. We have no other. "I," saith He, "am the way, and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He is the altar whence the hallowed incense arises which is expressive of the purity and ardour of a true devotion.

Prayer is an *unspeakable privilege*. For a creature like fallen man, to be allowed to draw nigh to the Holy God, and express all the desires of his heart, is indeed the privilege of sons. Abject man—man that is fallen by his iniquity, enjoys this favour. The hour of prayer is the appointed hour of this communion. Here the Father of

mercies meets his offending creature with the smile of reconciliation ; and here the creature with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, meets his offended, but graciously reconciled Father. It is the communion of the created with the uncreated mind ; a creature of yesterday holding converse with Him who is from everlasting ; a creature who knows nothing, in intimate and unembarrassed intercourse with Him who knows all things ; one, who for his abjectness is as a worm, and who for his sinfulness might make sackcloth his covering, tranquil and comforted in the presence of that Holy Lord God.

Nor is there under the Gospel any exclusive spot for prayer. Territorial division, secular and ecclesiastical demarcation, earthly distinctions are all banished here. It is God's communion with the king and the beggar ; with those who are near on the land, and those who are afar off upon the sea. True piety is the same every where, because God is every where the same object of worship, and the same hearer of prayer. To different climes, and all the different classes of men, to men of various habits of thought, to men of manual toil, and men of intellectual study, to the cool and tranquil philosopher, the patient historian, and the imaginative and ardent poet, the throne of grace brings substantially the same consolations, and calls forth the same warm emotions of grateful and adoring love, melting penitence and implicit faith.

Secrets may be committed to God that cannot be entrusted to another. It is relief which the world knows not of to tell him all. The conscience wounded by a sense of sin, finds healing there. Want finds supply ; distrust finds confidence, and depression praise. Ignorance is enlightened there ; poverty is enriched, and weakness becomes strong. Darkness is there dispelled, and trembling hopes encouraged. The bruised reed is not broken there, nor is the smoking flax quenched. Grace there cherishes what it bestows, and completes what it begins. Spiritual enemies are there

disarmed, or if not, the christian is furnished with armour for renewed and successful conflict. Not like angels' visits, that are few and far between, the promises there daily refresh the soul, disperse its gloom, and turns its mourning into joy. That man is truly wretched who, when earthly enjoyments fail, has no other to which he can resort ; while he who can come to the footstool of God's mercy is never wretched. That is no barren land, but one where the heavens are opened, and waters are poured upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. It is no place of storms and tempest ; but a hiding from both. The region is healthful, because it is pure ; it is quiet and serene, where faith, soaring in its flight, looks down upon earth and upward towards heaven. It is the sanctuary of God, and where angels dwell. It is the rest of the soul. Ten thousand times ten thousand tongues, in approaching it, have given utterance to the thought, "Return unto thy *rest*, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee!" Like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, they have often exclaimed, "Lord, it is good to be here!" Prayer is the proper business of a man who is a sinner. He will never know how to live, nor how to die, if he is not a man of prayer. God giveth liberally: He giveth without upbraiding. He is as free to give the best gifts, as the meanest ; and to the most necessitous, as to the least needy. He has no pardon for the sinless, no wisdom for the wise ; no courage for the resolute, no strength for the strong ; no hope for the presumptuous. "To this man," says He, "will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his trouble." In a word He says, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst ; I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

J. LATHROP, D.D.

ON THE CHARACTER OF HAZAEI.



II. Kings, viii. 13.—*“And Hazael said, But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?”*



THE language and spirit of Hazael, which have been those of many afterwards immersed in crime, express self-confidence, abhorrence and condemnation of crime, mental and social elevation, and present freedom from evil inclination, as seemingly adequate grounds of security against the violation of moral law. But these I am to exhibit as false and worthless.

I. That which is evidently expressed in the words of Hazael is a strong confidence that he should not be found guilty of those enormities which were foretold of him. This affords the first point of consideration in viewing the false grounds of security against crime.

When the possibility of sinful action has been hinted, or the contemplation of it excited, it has been with them as it was with David, when he declared, “And in my prosperity I said, I never shall be moved.” Vainly imagining that they knew themselves too well to be overtaken in outbreking sins, they have rested on themselves as the surest ground of hope. “Ephraim said, In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin.” Yet, like Ephraim, whom God cast off, many who have thus confided in themselves have fearfully plunged into criminal excesses. They have proved the word which saith, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” Such self-confidence displays an ignorance of heart, which almost inevitably leads to the commission of wrong.

The imagination cannot present conditions of life with sufficient of the vividness of reality, so as to enable one to make for himself the proof against any sin. There lie deep in the human heart, seeds of evil which are almost wholly unnoticed. They are beyond the scrutiny of the most

diligent observer of self. They are known fully by none but the great Searcher of hearts. They wait only for a change of circumstances, and when this comes they start forth with mighty energy, and break through the strong restraints which society and law has thrown around them.

II. The second false ground of security which may be exhibited is an abhorrence of crime.

When the weeping prophet stood before Hazael, and with searching gaze, announced the atrocities which he was about to commit, the soul of the Syrian revolted at their contemplation. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" How could he be so accursed as to act thus? He expressed an utter abhorrence of such vile action. As has been proved of others, his repudiating words might have been the sincere expression of his heart, inasmuch as he was ashamed when the prophet gazed stedfastly on him. The divine proverb is, that "Most men will proclaim their own goodness: but a faithful man - who will find?" By what means, then, may one exalt himself more, than by loudly denouncing the errors and crimes of others? Men often think that such denunciation must of necessity prove their own integrity. But too frequently it condemns them utterly. The vindictive and oppressive spirit which they exhibit towards an offender, only leads to the conviction, that had they been placed in similar circumstances, they would have been found equally culpable.

The pride of man may place before his eyes the ignominy and reproach which the development of such a character and course would be sure to draw upon him from his fellow man: or his selfishness may picture to his view the gloom of a prison wall, or the agonies by the halter; and therefore he might loathe the crime that would bring such results.

But however sincere such loathing may be, it yet admits the possibility of wrong-doing in the very respect abhorred; because the soul not being thoroughly imbued with a sense of moral evil in its true nature, they lose sight of the con-

sequences of crime, may persuade itself of escape therefrom, and therefore may proceed delusively to its commission.

The safeguard of the soul must be found in other sources—not in the expression of loathing towards crime.

III. I proceed now to exhibit a third ground of security against crime as false and worthless. Mental and social elevation is that to which I refer. Hazael must have possessed an intellect of no ordinary character, in order to have entitled him to, and fitted him for, a position of so much eminence as that of the chief officer of Benhadad.

His elevated position might also seem to argue an excellence of heart more than common. To these, therefore, his mind may have turned, while evil was foretold of him, as the surest ground against its commission.

We, too, may have seen one of elevated intellect, skilled in a science which requires thought and learning, and occupying a position of honor and influence among his distinguished fellows. Why should we not also, with him, have concluded that such intellectual superiority, such social distinction, utterly forbade the commission of that dark and dreadful crime?

It is the conclusion which seems at first to force itself imperatively upon the mind. But is it not fallacious? at least, does it not fail to be demonstrative? it is by no means certain that mental cultivation will secure its possessor from crime. It may render its commission somewhat less probable, as it places the man in circumstances and relations which tend to restrain the evil passions of the soul; but it does not of necessity exert a direct influence upon that soul for its purification.

But then may it not be asked, whether the education of the mind in religious truth may not be a safeguard? We would not deprecate the power of divine truth. We believe it to be the wisdom of God unto salvation.

But in considering truth simply as knowledge—abstract information, separate from the necessary accompaniment of

spiritual influence, of divine grace, it has no essential power to preserve from crime.

IV. I call your attention to one other consideration which may be viewed as a false ground of security against flagrant crime. It is the absence of present evil inclination. We may rightly separate this from an abhorrence of wrong, for such an inclination may arise in the heart, and urge its gratification at the very time when the moral sense and the conscience are both proclaiming loudly against an evil. Hazael might have repelled the declaration of the prophet with the most earnest horror, and yet there might then have been in his soul the beginnings of desire and inclination to do those very things. How often have the first suggestions of crime, startled and alarmed the soul in which they arose! How often too, with a feeling of self-loathing and condemnation, has the hand been put forth tremblingly, that the inclination, triumphant over the reason and conscience, might be gratified. Grant it now, however, that no such inclination exists at present in the soul, that there is not discoverable the least desire to commit a wrong. Does this necessarily afford security against its future exercise? By no means! there are no certain calculations on such grounds. One may not in the least be inclined to a future and ultimate wrong of heinous character, though disposed to something lesser. Yet by the indulgence of such wrong, he may ultimately be led to a greater. One sin regarded as insignificant, may lead on to another which had never been contemplated, and which is committed as the means to a desired object.

I. Let no one feel secure on such fallacious grounds. We know not our own hearts fully. We cannot estimate our own strength correctly in view of any given circumstances. We may think ourselves fully armed against any evil thing; but in an hour of weakness, which we know not of now, we may be overcome. Trusting too much in ourselves, we may be resigned to madness and folly in sin—we may be so unguarded as to fall unexpectedly. Oh!

what would those who have fallen, now give, could they go back to their innocence? We may abhor sin and condemn crime, and we may so hush the voice of conscience and tamper with our moral sense, as to leave ourselves unprotected from evil. We are not, and cannot be fully assured against the excitement of unholy desires. Oh! when we think how many of the strong hearted who shrunk at the thought of disgrace—who held high places on earth—who were as free from open sin as we may be,—have fallen, irrecoverably fallen—how need we tremble for ourselves!

Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall. Let us fear to sin, both in word, in deed, and in spirit. Let us watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. Each one has a heart by nature deceitful, and desperately wicked.

II. Moreover, let us not forget to render praise and glory to God, that he hath restrained us from destructive crimes. And who can say, that there was no possibility of our lot being similar to that of Hazeal? Has it not been a wise and righteous Providence that has restrained us? "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name" be the glory of our preservation. Are we in reality more pure by nature? Do not anger, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, often rankle in our hearts? Are we not sometimes envious, ambitious, and covetous? How know we but that such a spirit might have been developed to such an extreme, as to land us at the place of execution or of imprisonment? it is not impossible. Why has it not been, as it is asked? It is because God has not suffered us to be surrounded by influences too potent to be resisted, because He has warded us from temptation which might have prevailed over us. We must not secretly doubt or deny this; else shall we deny His universal presence, His minute providence, His upholding grace. We are verily debtors to Him for such restraining love. We must not withhold the expression of gratitude, the offering of our hearts for preserving goodness.

H. KOLLOCK, D.D.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE.

Heb. x. 35.—“ *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*”

It is evident that the confidence here mentioned by the Apostle, is not merely that trust in the personal sacrifice of Christ whence springs pardon of sin, for he writes to those who have been “illuminated,” and *knew in themselves* that they had “in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

It is the filial trust of a believing heart, washed from guilt in the redeeming blood, already an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ, because adopted as a child, receiving continually the smiles of heaven through the intercession of Christ, delighting to look upon Him as one “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our fortification.” And in what is this confidence placed? In self-goodness, or self-power? No; but in God, through Jesus Christ alone.

Man has nothing within or around himself whereon to hang this confidence. This, then, abases him in his own esteem; so that out of Christ he deems himself unworthy of consideration. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by faith.” The more of this confidence the Christian possesses, the more humble will he be; for it strips him of self-righteousness, and makes Christ supreme in the heart. And on what is it immediately grounded? Does it spring like a logical sequence from repeatedly observing that we perform such and such duties, that we obey such and such commandments, that we bring forth such and such fruits of the spirit? What is the testimony of the divine oracles? “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear;

but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." Foremost and without which nothing else can be of any avail, must be the direct testimony of the spirit of God that we are born of Him. How do we know that this is so, that we do not labour under an illusion of the imagination? This knowledge, too, is wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Spirit: it is the concurrent witness of our own spirit, the "answer of a good conscience toward God," by the graces in us, and the holy obedience given to every commandment. This childlike reliance of the saint—this rejoicing confidence, is not founded on dim speculations, on vague hopes, on boasted deeds, but on the direct and clear testimony of the Divine Spirit with his spirit, that his sins are remitted through the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God; that reconciled to God, he is adopted, and made an heir of glory. In this must be the basis of all the enjoyment in the blessings of the kingdom of grace here, and all for which we may look in the glory hereafter.

In hours of distress it ministers consolation. In danger it brings preservation and rescue. In trouble it gives support and relief. In temptation it provides succour, and makes a way of escape. In all circumstances it is a rich source of peace and joy to the pious heart, such as never entered the dream of earthly pleasure—in health and sickness, in wealth and poverty, in honour and reproach, in enjoyment and persecution, in life and death. It realizes not only a deliverance from all evil, but a communication of all that is good. The desert blooms again! and flowers and fountains are spread over the waste, desolate heart. The soul is strong for duty, and ready for the trial of its faith. Toil is sweet, and sacrifice a delight. Change may go on all around, but it triumphs over change. Years may gather upon the brow, but their faithfulness to the service of God has not diminished its freshness and comfort. Who can tell how rich in delight earth may be, with this confidence in God keeping the soul: with the kingdom of

righteousness, and peace, and joy as its government: with the sure promise that the maintenance of this confidence is constantly adding to the lustre of our heavenly crown! But its highest, its supremely great "recompense of reward" is beyond the grave. Therefore the Apostle exhorts his Hebrew brethren to constancy, reminding them of their "better and enduring substance." The glorious end of this confidence must be unrealized till eternal ages shall unroll their growing wonders. Though we sacrifice everything, lack everything, suffer everything here, still this reliance reaches to the revelations of a more blissful inheritance. Now it is unspeakable, yea, unsearchable; for it is unbounded. Ceaseless enjoyment comprehends all the glories of heaven, measures its exquisite delights, weighs its crowns of gold, numbers its palms of victory, spreads out to the breezes of paradise its robes of light, encircles its companionships; and you have not yet this "great recompense of reward"—you have not yet spanned eternity—you have not yet reached that "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" With expanding and quickened facilities, with ever-opening objects for thought and feeling, with closer approach to the infinite, and changing into the divine likeness, the faithful saints shall reap the eternity of their reward. "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence." And shall we? If possessed of so rich a treasure, what folly, what spiritual suicide, to suffer ourselves to be deprived of it!

The Apostle here alludes to the conduct of the ancient warrior. The Lacedæmonians were celebrated for a valour which chose death before an ignominious defeat; therefore, they threw their lives away rather than shrink from the foe. The mothers of their young men often gave them, as they departed for the fight, the shield of the father, and commanded them to bring it back, or be brought back upon it—that is, to return victorious or slain. So the loyal, valiant Paul bids the soldier of the cross never to give up

his shield, never cast it away in foul retreat. Ours is a mighty moral conflict. The enemies with whom we contend are numerous and formidable, subtle and superior to ourselves. Our only hope is in Him on whom we can depend as the "Captain of our salvation." In Him we know we may gain the victory. But this confidence is the badge of our fellowship with Him, at the same time that it is our shield, invulnerable to the attempts of our adversary. If we can cast this away, we can have no hope of succour and deliverance from Him. We must fall a prey to the devourer. Let us, then, resist the various devices to ensnare us.

Cast not away your confidence in any sore temptation. Long as we live we must pass through it. Numberless are the darts of the enemy to try this shield; and if we have vulnerable points, Satan is not long in making the discovery. The world, the flesh, the devil assail us; they come combined in battle array; they come each with insidious snares. Yet, although they encompass you with their besetments, cling to this shield, "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," and you shall come off a joyful conqueror. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." If you have already fallen, rise quickly, for the enemy is bearing down upon you. Grasp the shield again! Betray not your confidence by going still further backward, by wholly giving over the strife. You are then certainly lost. Recover your position, and press onward without one instant's delay; for, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Cast it not away in trial and affliction. These should rather strengthen our hold. It may be the will of God that our confidence be thus tested, as was that of Job; therefore, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you;

but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." A wicked generation may task its ingenuity to persecute you, may point at you the finger of scorn, may treat you with chilling neglect; but "blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Your path may be amid rough scenes, but let not tribulation hide you from God. He can "furnish a table in the wilderness," as He did for the sojourning Israelites. It may be your lot to lose earthly possessions, bodily health, the association of loved friends, but still trust in God. Cast it not away should the prosperity and flattery of the world try to attract you from it. Perhaps this is the least dreaded, but it is the most dangerous combatant, for, like Judas, it first kisses, then betrays.

But the Christian should keep in mind, that however the treasures of the earth may accumulate around, every prop is taken away if this confidence be removed from Christ. It is in the enjoyment of this confidence, grasping as it does the substance of eternal felicities, that we see the emptiness of this world's mirth, and the fleetness of its gifts. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Riches, honour, pleasure, are sure to build upon the sand, because they know nothing more enduring than this world, and must be swept away at the outbursting of divine judgment. He who leans on such dependencies is like one pressing his feet on the crumbling edge of a dizzy precipice, while everlasting destruction awaits him below!

S. B. BANGS.

ON BECOMING REAL CHRISTIANS.

—o—
John ix. 27.—*"Will ye also be his disciple?"*
—o—

BE whose disciple? A disciple of Jesus, the Son of God, who loved us, and bought us with His blood. Say, my friend, will you be His disciple? Stay one moment, I entreat you, and answer this important question. I ask you in the name of that Saviour who bled for you, who suffered for you, and who died for you, will you be His disciple, or not? It is equal to asking you, will you be happy or miserable? Will you serve God or the devil? Will you go to heaven or hell? Perhaps you are ready to reply, I am His disciple; God forbid that I should not be a Christian. Be it so, my friend; I hope you are indeed His disciple—a real Christian. If such is your happy lot, you are rich indeed. Be your earthly condition what it may, you are an heir of glory. God is your Father, Christ is your Saviour, and heaven is your eternal home. Let us, however, not deceive ourselves on this important point. A mistake here may be fatal—may be irreparable; and it will be so, if, while we imagine ourselves to be the followers of Jesus, we are the slaves of sin and unbelief. In these days, when persecution no more lights her fire, when the Inquisition rears its head no longer, it is easy to profess to be Christians; and we should even think ourselves degraded were not this venerable appellation given us. But the profession of Christianity, and the practice of it, are not always found united.

In the first ages of the gospel, the holy and useful lives of Christians had no small tendency to spread its influence through the world, and prove that its author was God. Then indeed men could not make a profession of Christianity,

or enter the Christian church, till they were capable of exhibiting the power of their faith in their walk and conversation, and till they had given satisfactory evidence of the sincerity of their profession. It is not so now. We are made Christians in childhood, and bear the name, whatever may be our faith and practice. It is this which has brought Christianity into contempt, and sunk its pure and holy light beneath the ungodliness of its professors. Who does not feel the force of the poet's censure?—

“Ye brainless wits! ye baptized infidels!
Ye worse for mending,—washed to fouler stains!”

Now, to be a Christian, and to be called one, are vastly different things — often as wide of each other as light and darkness, heaven and hell. Would you be a Christian indeed? Then you must be something vastly different from what the world generally supposes necessary. The Christian indeed rises as far above all which the world calls good or great, as the Alps tower above the molehills at their base. A Christian is one whom grace makes free from the love of sin, and grace prepares for glory; whose heart has bled over the long neglect of God and of Christ, and all the disobedience and contempt of his heavenly Father's will; who has seen himself lost and undone by sin, but has found forgiveness in the atoning blood of Jesus; who henceforth views Him as the sinner's friend, and looks to Him for the blessings of eternal salvation.

He also regards himself as a traveller to eternity. This world is not his rest. He is a stranger and a pilgrim here; all below the skies is regarded by him as of but momentary importance. Heaven is his home; thither is he constantly tending, and for its holy pleasures and employments he is daily preparing. He hopes to dwell with God and Christ, and with all the saints, for ever; and this is all his salvation and all his desire. Perhaps you will say, if this be the character of a Christian, few, indeed, attain to it. Be it so; yet many have attained to it. Such were Peter, and Paul,

and John, and their fellow disciples. Such have been multitudes in every age. Such, doubtless, are multitudes now, if the world had eyes to see, and candour enough to confess it; and what is more important, such may you become. Only seek to know your own weakness, and the Saviour's strength; and then be determined to seek this high character through Him.

I will first remind you—That your obligations to God demand, that you should thus serve him. Oh! reflect what those obligations are. He gave you your very being, and placed you amidst all the advantages of religion and education, and piety, which you have enjoyed. From your earliest infancy up to the present time, He has been your kindest friend. He has watched over you and supplied all your wants. Perhaps He has raised you from a bed of sickness, when all around despaired of your recovery. Perhaps He has covered your head in the day of danger, when no earthly arm could save; or it may be that in numberless instances, He has, though unseen, warded off the deadly blow, and turned you aside from the pit of death. There is not an hour in your existence in which you can say, in that hour I received no blessing from God, or in that hour I needed not his mercy. And yet perhaps, in all your life you have never offered up one heartfelt prayer to God, or raised one grateful acknowledgement to the Father of all your mercies. Or perchance in some season of danger you have promised, "If God will but spare me now, I will dedicate myself to His service," you have been spared, but have your vows been forgotten? O then, whosoever you are, or whatever be your condition, the God that made you, and that will one day call you to account, demands that you should serve him with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. His language to you is, "My son, give me thine heart." Great, however, as your obligations confessedly are to the God of love, the Father of all mercies, and the God of all consolation, you are, if possible, under

greater obligations still to Him who died for your salvation, to your Redeemer ! “He is the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, and by Him all things were created—things in heaven and things in earth.” Yet he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that you, and I, and all mankind might never die. Yes my friend, think of what you owe to him. When midnight darkness veils the sky, and all the artillery of heaven seems to play upon your head, O think that He, whose voice speaks through the deafening thunder, and whose glory shines in every glistening flash, was once a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief for you. Or when you contemplate the beauties of this fair creation, and as you wander on from field to field, from flower to flower, with admiration and delight, O let the solemn truth find admission to your heart, that He who formed them all ; who gave to every scene its loveliness ; who shed on every flower its beautiful tints ; whose mighty power upraised the mountains, or rolled on the murmuring stream, once veiled his glory in mortal flesh, and came to earth to bleed and die for man. Or think once more, when evening spreads her silver glories over your head, and your eyes rove from star to star, from sun to sun, and from world to world, throughout the vast azure expanse, Oh ! think that hand which formed them all, and gave them power to shine through six thousand years, was once nailed on Calvary’s cross for you, that you might shine a star, a sun, when these shall shine no more. Remember that Saviour loves you still. He asks your love in return for all His dying love and living grace. He promises to enrich you with his favor for ever ; and does not

“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demand thy soul, thy life, thy all ?”

Yet once more, how much you are indebted to the Holy Spirit. How often has He striven with you ! How often have you felt your heart impressed, and constrained to feel,

that religion and eternity were serious things ! How often has that still small voice directed you to the narrow path of life, and said, this is the way, walk ye in it ! But, alas ! again, and again have you banished all solemn feelings from your breast ; and instead of cherishing those sacred warnings, which would have led you on to piety and peace, you sought in some gay, worldly scene, perhaps in some vile sinful pleasure, to harden your heart against these serious calls ! Yet although you have thus grieved the Holy Spirit, and abused His love and grace, He still strives with you. And now what other argument shall I plead with you ? Your own soul ; your own interest ; your own eternal salvation ? Would you be happy ? Would you be blessed for ever in heaven ? Would you escape eternal death ?—the death that never dies ?—then yield to Him who says, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Perhaps you have a feeling heart ; you can weep over the sorrows of your fellow men ; you love to stretch forth the helping hand, and relieve the needy suppliant ; your heart thrills with sweet delight while you feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and wipe the tear from the widow and the orphan’s eye ; blessed benevolence ! But ah ! my friend, remember that if you were a Christian indeed, you might impart a more valuable blessing. The hungry will soon cease to need the food your charity imparts. The naked will not long require the clothing your pitying hand bestows. The widow and the orphan’s tears will not always flow : but when, ah ! when, will they cease to need the blessings of the everlasting Gospel, which you might, perhaps, be able to impart ? Alas ! in this respect, you are yourself as poor as they ; perhaps you are more poor, and blind, and wretched, and naked.

It may be you are a father, or a mother, or a guardian, or a friend, and you have some young children placed beneath your care, for whom you must give an account.

And when the small and the great shall stand before God, must not you be there? And can you bear to see your children, those whom you have loved, stand on the left hand with the condemned multitudes? Can you bear to hear that awful word, "Depart, I never knew you?" Or can you answer, when the Judge shall say, I entrusted to thy care these little ones, to train them up for me and immortality. What have you done? Their blood be upon you for ever. O then, first be a Christian indeed yourself, then go to teach your children the way of life eternal.

We can only add one word, let it be received with that profound seriousness its unutterable importance demands. Each of you we ask, in the name of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, will you be his disciple? Retire, then, from this service; enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut to thy door, offer unto Him, who seeth in secret, thy decision. Amen.

A. SUTTON.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD BINDS MEN TO BE HOLY.

I. Peter i. 16.—"*Because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy.*"

THIS epistle is addressed to Christians in general; and therefore its precepts and exhortations may be justly considered as applicable to Christians in every age, as well as in every part of the world. It becomes Christians now, as much as ever it did, to be holy in all manner of conversation, for the reason which the apostle assigns in the text. "Because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy." In

Leviticus, xi. 44, God says to His people, "I am the Lord your God ; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves ; and ye shall be holy, for I am holy." The same sentiment is expressed in several other passages in the Old Testament. But since all men are equally the creatures of God, and equally need His favor, this text equally applies to men of all ages, characters, and conditions, and equally proves the duty and necessity of one man's being holy as well as another. The doctrine is—that God's being holy, renders it absolutely necessary that men should be holy. I shall,

I. Show in what holiness consists.

Holiness is a general term to express that goodness, or benevolence, which comprises every thing that is morally amiable and excellent. So that holiness properly means that love to God and man which the divine law requires, and all the moral exercises and affections that flow from it. Universal benevolence leads the subject of it to regard all beings according to their apparent worth and importance, and to seek their good, according to the rank they hold in the scale of existence. This disposition will incline any being to treat himself and every other being perfectly right. For true benevolence is, in its own nature, universal, disinterested, and impartial, and leads those who possess it to seek the highest good of the universe at large, whether this general good will involve their own good, or the good of other individuals, or not. Holiness, which essentially consists of pure love, lies in the heart, which is the seat of moral perfection in every moral agent. And this holiness of heart stands diametrically opposed to selfishness, which is the essence of all evil. Having concisely stated the nature of holiness, I proceed to show,

II. *'That God is holy.*

The scripture every where ascribes holiness to the Deity. It calls Him the Holy One more than twenty times ; and the Holy One of Israel more than thirty times. It represents the church on earth as saying, "Who is like thee, O Lord,

among the Gods', who is like thee, glorious in holiness!" And it represents all the heavenly world as crying with joy, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." The scripture not only gives the epithet *holy* to God, but represents the whole moral character as consisting in pure love, and universal benevolence. We read, "God is love." That is, His whole moral excellence consists in love. We read, "God is good unto all, and His tender mercies are over all His works." That is, His love is universal. We read, "He maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." That is, His love is impartial. We are told that when Moses requested God to show him His glory, He answered, "I will make all thy goodness pass before thee." And accordingly, "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty."

1. God is holy in all His natural attributes. These are always exercised in a holy manner. The almighty power of God is a natural attribute. But that is holy. He never exerts it but in a holy manner, or to answer some benevolent purpose. Hence His omnipotence is represented as a holy omnipotence. "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory." The wisdom of God is one of His natural attributes, by which He is capable of forming the best designs, and devising the best means of accomplishing them. The natural perfection is always under the influence of perfect holiness, and is never exercised from any other but benevolent purposes. It is said, "He is a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

2. God is holy in his *purposes*. He designed from eternity to exert and display all the perfections of His

nature. It was benevolence which prompted Him to form any designs, and to pursue any course of external conduct. The great plan which He formed before the foundation of the world, was designed to promote the largest measure of holiness in the universe that infinite wisdom and power can produce. All His designs, strictly speaking, are only so many constituent parts or branches of His one great design. They all centre in the highest good of the intelligent universe. And this renders every one of his designs as really holy as another. They all originate in holiness, and tend to promote it.

3. God is holy in his *word*. All His commands are holy, just, and good, and expressive of His love to holiness. His laws require nothing but purity, and forbid nothing but what is unholy and sinful. His promises are all holy, and intended to manifest His cordial approbation of the holy affections of His dutiful creatures. All His threatenings are also holy, and designed to reveal His holy displeasure and wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God has said nothing in His word but what flowed from a holy heart, and tends to promote some holy purpose.

4. God is holy in all his *works*. He was holy in calling into existence every created object. He created just so many creatures, of just such a nature, of just such a size, and just such a duration, as would best subserve the purposes of His holiness. He made every thing in weight and in measure, and His holiness determined what these should be. He made nothing to no purpose, and nothing to an ill purpose. He had a holy, benevolent and important purpose in every thing He made.

III. That since God is holy, *it highly concerns men to be holy*.

This is the reason He gives for the command, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." The perfect holiness of the Deity lays all mankind under a moral obligation and necessity of

being conformed to His likeness and character. This will appear from various considerations.

1. It is necessary in order to discover the supreme excellence and glory of a holy God. "Without holiness, no man can see the Lord." It is impossible that those who are wholly destitute of every holy and benevolent feeling, should know how a holy and benevolent being feels. This is the general representation of scripture. Our Lord says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The apostle John says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." And St. Paul says on the one hand, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually disconcerned." And on the other hand he says, that those who are rooted and grounded in love, are "Able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Men must possess real holiness, in order to see its beauty in the divine character. But as soon as they become renewed, they can discern the beauty and glory of holiness. "For love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Without such a peculiar knowledge of the only true God, none can inherit eternal life.

2. It is necessary that men should be holy, in order to *obey* a holy God. This we are expressly told in His word. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And when the unholy Israelites publicly said, "We will serve the Lord," Joshua told them, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God." The laws of a holy God are all holy, and require holiness, and nothing but holiness. Hence, Christ represents holy love, or universal benevolence, as comprising all the duty and obedience which God requires of men. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This

is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." St. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." So long as men are destitute of love, they can do nothing which is to be regarded as obedience to the commands of an holy Being. Every precept He has issued is intended to aid in the formation of a human character in goodness and purity. We are to love and bless and do good to our enemies, that we may resemble our Father in heaven, who doeth good unto all, and whose sun shineth upon the just and unjust.

Finally. It is necessary for us to be holy, in order to our enjoyment of a holy God and a holy heaven. We can enjoy no object that is not pleasing to us. However contraries may sometimes harmonize, there can be no communion between Christ and belial. The presence of the Deity—the parental smile of the Father of lights—is the highest happiness than an immortal being can know and enjoy. There is no satisfaction like that which flows from a spiritual sense of fellowship with God. There is no joy like that which is to be found at His right hand. But for this we must be made meet by the Spirit of the Lord. And this is the promise: "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

It is therefore an important case, and admits not of delay, whether we are pursuing after holiness, or unconcerned about it. In a little time, sickness, or old age will bring eternity near, and place it before you. A little longer, and death will put you in actual possession of it. When that tremendous scene shall take place, should your lamps be gone out, for want of that holy conversation which the gospel requires, you will, at the day of judgment, be in the same condition with the foolish virgins who were excluded from the marriage feast, and left in outer darkness.

NATHANIEL EMMONS.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.



Matt. xxv. 29,—“ *To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.* ”



THE Parable of the Virgins, with which this chapter begins, was intended to convince Christians of the necessity of living in a constant state of preparation for the coming of their Lord, either at the general judgment at the end of the world, or to call them out of the world by death ; and to warn them of their danger of putting off their repentance to a late hour, lest the time of mercy should be past, and admission to the marriage feast of the Lamb should be refused to them. That Parable, therefore, concludes with this earnest command, “ watch therefore,” and be always ready, “ for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

To enforce this command, and fix it deeply in the mind of every Christian, that it might at all times influence his conduct, and keep him in a state of due preparation to receive his Lord, Christ immediately subjoined the parable of “ a man travelling into a far country, who,” before his departure, “ called his own servants to him, and delivered to them his goods ; to one five talents, to another two, and to another, one : to every one according to his several ability.” After a long time, their lord returned, and demanded an account of the talents he had committed to

them. He who had received five talents, had improved them so well, that he produced other five which he had gained by the use of them. He also which had received two talents, produced other two which he had gained by proper management. They were both applauded by their lord for their fidelity and diligence, were advanced in dignity and power, and were admitted into the joyful presence of their lord. But he who had received but one talent, managed it in a very different way; he entertained an opinion as false in fact, as it was foolish in practice . . . this his lord was a severe and covetous master, who would catch at every gain, however small, and punish severely any little loss he might incur in negotiating with his talent. He therefore hid it in the earth, and paid no further attention to it. Being called to his reckoning he produced his talent, and made his apology, founding his justification on his lord's rigorous and ungenerous usage of his servants, saying, "lord, I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed; and I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine."

His lord takes the case up on the principles he had avowed. Not that he admitted the justice of his representation, requiring improvements in an over proportion to the abilities he had given; but that by judging him out of his own mouth, and according to the principles on which he had acted he might make him feel the justice, as well as severity, of his sentence, "thou wicked and slothful servant, why didst thou not put my money to the exchanges, that at my coming I might receive my own with usury?" His lord then ordered the talent to be taken from him, and given to the faithful and diligent who had increased his five talents to ten. The text assigns the reason of this procedure, "For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

That this parable relates to the general judgment appears from its structure and issue. In this view of it, I shall employ this discourse in making such remarks upon it as fairly present themselves to our observation.

I. It is evident that the man going into a far country, represents Jesus Christ returning to heaven after His resurrection. He is properly our Lord and Master, not only as He is God, the Creator, by whom the world and all things in it were made, but also as He is the Redeemer of men, who has bought us with the price of His own blood, that we might live to Him, and be His servants who paid the ransom for us.

II. The lord in the parable, before his departure, called to him "his own servants, and delivered to them his goods," to every servant "according to his several ability." These talents they were to improve during his absence. So when Christ was about to ascend into heaven, He called His apostles, His own servants, to Him, and delivered to them His goods, that is, He committed to them His church, to be ordered, and governed, and built up by them; placing in it some to be apostles, some prophets, some teachers, and some private Christians; dividing to every man according to his several abilities, as in His infinite wisdom He saw best. For "when He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

III. It appears the improvement or neglect of the talents given to every one, will be the rule by which every one shall be judged; and that they who, having received but little, improve that little, shall be accepted as well as they who received much; and with them shall be rewarded according to the improvements they have made. For the servant who improved his two talents was admitted into the joy of his lord, as well as he who had improved five.

IV. It is evident that the final issue of this judgment will be very different to those who have, and to those who have not improved their talents. The reward of faithful

servants did not end in their acquittal in the judgment in which they were called; their conduct was approved, their talents were increased, and they were admitted into the joy of their lord. The condemnation of the wicked servant extended beyond the disapprobation of his judge: the principles on which he had acted were condemned; he was deprived of his talent, and "cast into utter darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The more general ground on which men, who give themselves but little concern about their salvation, build their hopes, is the infinite mercy of God, and the merit of Christ's death. "God's mercy," say they, "is infinite, and will be extended to all men: Christ died for all men, and therefore all men will be saved by His death." Happy would it be for us, could we be content that God should be wiser than we are: it would abate our self-sufficiency, and lead us to depend more on what He says, than on our own weak reasoning. In Him justice and mercy cannot operate against each other, because there is nothing discordant in His nature. His mercy is infinite; and through His mercy He gave His Son to be the Redeemer of all men, that all men through Him might be saved: and yet, we know that He hath not had mercy on the apostate angels. Christ died for all men, and yet the wicked servant was cast into outer darkness. It will be our wisdom, as it is our duty, to understand God's promises as they are generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture, and not endeavour to explain them in a sense which the candid and impartial interpretation of the sacred volume will not sanction.

He knows best His own nature and our state, and He will do and judge that which is right. In this description they must all be included to whom the gospel is freely preached, though many of them may refuse to accept it: because the offer of the gospel is a talent of which they, to whom it is made, must give an account; and consequently they shall be judged by the gospel which they unreasonably

rejected. Among these, the Jews must be reckoned, who obstinately and wickedly resisted all the calls to repentance, which were made to them by Christ and His apostles. Theirs was the favour of God's former dispensation ; a talent of great price, and which ought to have been better improved, and to have led them to Messiah, to whom their law and prophets clearly pointed.

Others there are, who directly imitate the conduct of the Jews. They reject the mediation and atonement of Christ, though freely preached and offered to them. Nor will they enter into His church, nor receive His laws, and as the Jews reject Christ that they may retain the law of Moses, and expect to obtain justification by it ; these people retire from the light and salvation of the gospel, to the dark and cold prospects of the religion of nature, on which they depend for justification with God.

Others, though they apparently receive the gospel, wickedly hide the talent in the earth, and make no improvement of it. They call themselves Christians, but bring not forth the good fruits which the gospel requires, and is calculated to produce ; consequently they can make no increase in holiness, nor in any Christian graces or tempers.

All these, when Christ shall descend from heaven to reckon with His servants concerning the talents committed to them—the blessings and advantages of the gospel dispensation—shall be judged by Him according to the law of the gospel.

BP. SEABURY.

SYMPATHY WITH CHRIST.

Matthew xx. 22, 23.—“*But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but, to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*”

THE two disciples of our Lord, who applied to have special posts of honour assigned to them in His kingdom, were ignorant of what was involved in their request. Such honour could be shared, only, by their having in another respect, been common sharers with the Lord. They must drink of this cup, and be baptized with His baptism. James and John desired to sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left; they are given to understand that in order to be joint-heirs with Christ in His glory, they must be ready to suffer with Him, we shall be also glorified together.

It would be a matter of sincere rejoicing if, even among men professing godliness, there were no evidence of the prevalence of a similar mistake. True prosperity in religion consists not in outward estate. Christ declared that His kingdom is not of this world. There may be the highest prosperity, the noblest advancement, in the absence of all these outward marks which men are wont to regard as the natural signs of a happy and prosperous state. The people of God may more deeply imbibe the Spirit of Christ—the effusion of the Holy Spirit may be granted, and it often has been, when the state of the church was externally calamitous. It may be pleasing to the imagination to depict to ourselves a

state of repose, and of external tranquillity, in which we are to have a share; but we should covet far more earnestly, as the best of all heavenly gifts, the effusion of the Holy Spirit, working that faith in us by which we have a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is this upon which the life and power of godliness—which promotes the mortification of sensual lusts, and eminent self-denial—and which beautifies, energises, sanctifies the church of God.

Let us inquire in what sense the disciples of Christ can be said to share in the cup and baptism of their Lord. It is obvious that the expiatory sufferings of Christ cannot be meant. The atonement was finished when He arose from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of power. It needs nothing to render it complete. His sufferings were wholly incommunicable; He was alone in them; not even angels, of whom legions stood ready to hasten to His succour, were permitted to share any part of His burden.

“As they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you,” are His own words. He thus distinctly forewarns them that they would have to meet the same hatred and persecution of the world, which He had encountered. And these words were fulfilled. Some of the apostles were imprisoned; some were slain with the sword; some were crucified with the head downward, and some after the manner of their Lord. And while these sufferings constituted no part of the atonement, they were encountered in the same cause, from the same enemies, and in a similar spirit of constancy and love. Of the cup which He drank, they partook, though not as He did; and with His baptism they were baptized, but it was His strength which upheld, and His grace which preserved them, Christ is persecuted and suffers in His members. He said to Saul of Tarsus, when He met him on his way to Damascus, “Why persecutest thou me?” In this sense the sufferings of Christians are His sufferings. When they are imprisoned, He is the captive; when they are slain with the sword, He receives

the blow ; when they are bound to the stake, He is the martyr. It is indeed, true, my brethren, that God, in His merciful providence exempts us from persecution, but He has not exempted us from seeking to have fellowship with His son, in His humiliation, self-denial, readiness to toil and suffer for the good of mankind. It is but a partial view of what is meant by bearing the cross, to understand simply the pains of martyrdom, or a willingness on the part of Christians to endure those pains rather than to deny the faith of Christ. The cross is to be borne daily. Never should the minister and professed followers of Christ cease to have fellowship with Him, as a Saviour whom the world knows and receives not, who is despised and rejected of men. In a season of external repose to the church, such fellowship, it is evident, is more difficult to be maintained, than when Christians are exposed to the violent assaults of inexorable foes. By the direct tendency of persecutions, they become crucified in spirit to the world, and the world is crucified to them.

Worldliness is the great danger to which the church is at this day exposed. It was this that brought about the great apostacy in the first ages. When Christianity became secularized, it was in as much favour with ungodly princes and lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God, as the system of Paganism had ever been. Had Nero and Domitian lived a few centuries later, instead of being persecutors, they, too, would have borne the title of "defenders of the faith." And in every commission in which that cardinal principle, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, is lost sight of—there the man of sin is found. If we have regarded the revival of ritualism as a dark and unpromising feature of the times ; and if we would guard against the tendency to this evil, it becomes an important duty to hold up, in the clearest light, the distinguishing features of the religion of Christ, and to shew that there is, and can be, no concord between light and darkness, or Christ and Belial.

The preaching of the cross must rebuke worldliness and pride ; nor is that worthy the name of Christian preaching by which these evils are not reprehended and rebuked.

What though the heirs of eternal glory should escape persecution, they must, nevertheless, lead humble and self-denying lives. They must often tread the thorny road of sacrifice, of hardship, and of danger. They must thus follow Christ. He came not to this world to travel in a flowery path, or recline in bowers of repose. He came to be disowned and rejected, to be a stranger in His own creation, without a place to lay His head ; to endure the contradiction of sinners ; to toil, and pray, and weep over a perishing world ; and at length to bear His own cross, until He fainted beneath His burden. And it is enough for the disciple to be as His Master, and the servant as his lord. Therefore they should regard it as no strange or unaccountable event if they meet with sore trials. They should not expect undisturbed repose, nor to "be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease." They should be looking for days of darkness and storm ; not indeed to afflict themselves with imaginary fears, but so to acquaint their thoughts with sufferings and disappointments, that they may not be shaken from their steadfastness. There will be no gain to religion by representing that nothing is to be lost or surrendered by embracing it, which the unsanctified heart loves. We may paint it with all the colouring that can please the sense, and persuade how easy it is to walk the road to heaven ; but our flowers of rhetoric will not scatter carnal sweets in the path of holiness ; it will still remain a "straight and thorny road." Men must give up something in order to become the disciples of Christ ; they must surrender much. They must give up the love of sin, renounce the vanities of the world and self. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." It is in spiritual conflicts, in sacrifices, and self-denying labours for the good of others, and

agonizing supplications, that the disciples and ministers of Christ must drink of the same cup, and be baptized with the same baptism as their Lord.

Again we remark, fellowship with Christ, as a despised, and suffering Saviour, is precisely what we need to prepare us to share in the triumphs and the glory of His kingdom.

This will be evident, in the first place, if we consider that the mortification of lust and pride, deepens the work of grace in the hearts of true believers, and prevents the prevalence of spurious piety. It tends to detach their affections more entirely from the world, and awaken within them more fervent aspirations after heavenly peace and blessedness. Such is the power of indwelling sin, that earth needs to be made to them a suffering and perilous abode, that they may never be unmindful that they are strangers and pilgrims, and have here no continuing city. Did the world extend to the religion of Christ, a bland and gracious reception, and were the path of Christians made smooth and pleasant through it, how great would be the danger of their becoming conformed to its spirit, and how few, it is to be feared, would give evidence of being dead to its allurements.

Sufferings for Christ's sake, moreover, will foster the spirit of self-denial, and the endurance of hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. It is danger which demands a spirit of self-sacrifice, in worldly matters, and which has led to the performance of those noble actions which excite admiration among men. And it is no less true, in spiritual things, that the most heroic and self-denying Christians have been formed under similar influences. As we do not expect the developement of the sterner and more sublime attributes of manhood, where all is softness and effeminate luxury, so we are not to expect the high attainments in piety, and the most faultless specimens of Christian character, when Christians are entire strangers to the offence of the cross, and flow on in the world upon a smooth and unruffled current.

The cross ever has been, and must continue to be, the emblem of true Christianity in the world; not merely a painted and gilded ornament, or an object of religious veneration, but the spiritual badge of the soldier of Christ, who is waging war with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The two disciples, James and John, sought for posts of distinction in the kingdom of their Master; they should have known that in order to share His glory, they must drink the cup He drank, and be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with. Throughout the Scriptures, suffering with or for Him, is made to issue in a participation of His glory. Such suffering promotes a sincere, humble, and self-denying piety, and therefore prepares the people of God to attempt and accomplish much for Zion.

A glorious work is to be accomplished in this world. Jesus is to take the kingdom to Himself, and that His people may be made ready to be co-heirs of the glory, He will make them co-workers in reclaiming a lost world to Himself. But who shall follow in His conquering train? If the Captain of salvation was made perfect through sufferings, must not those whom He leads to conquest be baptized with the same baptism, and drink of the same cup? Must they not follow Him in humility, in self-denial, and unwearied labours for the good of men? And what if actually called to tread the wine press of sufferings! to bare their backs to the smiters, and their cheek to them who pluck off the hair! to be despised and rejected! Are not the soldiers of the cross to share in the dangers of their glorious Leader. Does He say, "Follow me?" and do we expect to be led by Him, who had not where to lay His head, only into enchanted bowers, or to feasts of joy?

In conclusion, I remark that this subject pointedly rebukes ambitious views, and a worldly policy in the professed followers of Christ. The two disciples who sought for places of distinction in the kingdom of Christ, knew not for what they asked. Their eye was upon a throne, regal splendour,

an obsequious retinue, the homage of admiring thousands. Oh deluded disciples ! ye did not know that the only earthly crown of your Master was to be a wreath of thorns. His only royal robe some worn-out gorgeous vestment of a Herod. His only sceptre a poor brittle reed ! Ye did not know He was to be proclaimed King of the Jews, by an insulting inscription on the timber which bore up His lacerated body ! Oh ye did not know that to ask for distinction in His kingdom, was to ask for a share in the cup and baptism of His sufferings !

What a sore evil is ecclesiastical ambition proved to the cause of Christ ! The world still mourns under its influence. The midnight gloom it is true, has been broken ; but the full light of day will never shine until the spirit which actuated the two disciples in their request, has been expelled from the Church, and the disciples and ministers of Christ have fellowship with Him, in respect to efforts and sacrifices to save a dying world. Away, then, with accursed ambition from the Church ! Let us seek to catch the spirit of the Redeemer who toiled, and wept, and bled for man. Let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus ; this is to have fellowship with Him. Then we shall not seek or look for a mere post of honour or emolument, we shall rejoice to be found in the hardest field of labour, in the hottest of the conflict. We shall be willing to go where there are many difficulties to be overcome, many trials to be endured, many enemies to be encountered, few to sympathize with us, and but little prospect of any earthly requital.

G. T. BEDELL, D.D.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.



Hebrews ii. 18.—“*For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.*”



THE epistle from which this soothing declaration is taken, was addressed to no particular church, but to the Hebrews or Jews generally, who had embraced the Christian faith. These converts were exposed to violent persecution from their unbelieving countrymen; and perhaps, their religious steadfastness was endangered, by some lingering prejudices in their own minds, arising from the nationality of their established ritual, and the indistinct view which they had of the gospel. To fortify them under their sufferings, and to preserve them from drawing back and turning away from the faith, the apostle instructs them upon the distinctive doctrines of Christianity; and gives them such views of the sympathy of Christ, as were calculated to soothe their dejected and troubled minds.

The sentiment in our text is simply this, that our great High Priest, by His own experience, is eminently qualified to give His afflicted people that special aid which their trials and conflicts may require. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

The *first* point to which we would direct our thoughts, is the implied condition of Christians in their present state. It is intimated that they *are tempted*. And this is true, with more or less of exactness, of all who live godly in Christ Jesus, as it was of the suffering Hebrews to whom it was addressed.

But what is temptation? It literally signifies *trial*. And this will apply to all intelligent creatures. To angels, some of whom kept not their first estate. To man, even in his original purity, since by that he fell in paradise. But much more is this the case with the human family now, fallen and depraved, and exposed to evil influences on every side.

Temptation is not in itself, essentially a bad thing. It is something that calls us to action or to suffering. The good or evil which may attend it, arises from the design of the tempter, and the condition of the tempted. It puts our principles to the test, as in the case of Abraham, when the Lord tempted him with respect to the offering of Isaac. In this respect, it tends to perfect the Christian character, and shew the world the reality and excellence of true religion. Hence we are directed to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of our faith worketh patience." And again, "blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

Still, whenever our obedience is thus put to the trial, we are in danger of committing sin. Hence the word is generally taken, and often used, in a bad sense. So St. James: "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Our Saviour has therefore taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:" and more than once has He admonished His people to "watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation."

We may learn from hence, that there is always a degree of peril in being tempted. And great is the conflict which it often kindles in the Christian between the flesh and the spirit. The mind is distracted; gloomy suggestions against the truth of the gospel, perplex and disquiet the soul; thoughts which disturb devotion, and dry up every stream of holy joy in religious duties; passions are thereby stirred

up, rendered more violent by restraint, and never satisfied by indulgence. Yet, kept by the power of God through faith and salvation, though now for a season in heaviness through manifold temptations, we may rejoice that "the trial of our faith being much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Such is the state of Christians in the present world. Temptation is universally their lot. It often prevails against them, and always exercises their faith and patience. It is necessary to their best interests, and will work out for them a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But the text points us *secondly* to the source of relief. The Saviour having suffered from temptation Himself, is thereby qualified by experience to succour the tempted. The idea of the apostle is borrowed from a principle common to our nature. We say, such an one, this man, or that woman as the case may be, is able to sympathize with the sufferer, having suffered in the same way, or under the same trial. Hence the Saviour is, as a man made like unto His brethren, eminently qualified to succour those who are exposed to trial and affliction of any kind, and in any measure.

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same."

In a form as severe as ever was presented to man, He was tempted, nay, His sufferings surpassed all others in their variety and intenseness. As the Captain of our salvation He was made perfect through suffering. Not that trials were necessary to test His virtue or purify His character, for His nature was without a stain: but the scenes of humiliation and sorrow through which He passed, brought forth His character to light, and displayed a model for the imitation of those who should be tried in the same manner. Neither are we to suppose, that He would not have had

power to succour others if He had not gone through these sufferings. But as one who has been sick, is qualified to sympathize with the sick—as one who has been poor and in want is able to enter into the feelings of the needy and destitute—as one who has lost a child or dearest friend is able to commiserate the bereaved condition of the parent who is called to follow a beloved son or daughter to the grave, so the Redeemer is most perfectly qualified to mingle His tears of tenderness and compassion with those of His suffering brethren, having drank deeply of the same cup, and endured the same flight of affliction. And hence it is, that ministers of the gospel are often much persecuted and afflicted, either in their sacred office, or worldly circumstances, or domestic and family relations, that they may be able to sympathize with the most humble and afflicted of their flock.

Our Lord, says the apostle, was tempted—that is, was tried and afflicted. His condition in the world was itself a severe and one continued temptation. Poor, despised, reproached, persecuted—He suffered hunger, weariness, pain, sorrow, indignity, and every species of contradiction and hardship. His earthly kindred scarcely credited Him. The multitude followed Him only as long as He fed them. His countrymen, the Jews, denied His Messiahship, and ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub. On perjured testimony they obtained a sentence of condemnation against Him ; and even when in the excruciating tortures of crucifixion, they mocked Him with every kind of wanton scorn and derision ; while the disciples forsook Him in the hour of His bitterest distress.

But from these trials of unequalled severity, we derive the great consolation conveyed in the text. He has ability from dear bought experience, to *succour* His friends. To succour, is literally to “run unto the cry of any one :” to relieve him in his distress, and to come in haste as a parent would at the cry of his child. The exact meaning of the

word, is said to be derived from the aid required and given in battle, when one wing of the army is hemmed in by the enemy, and in danger of being completely cut down, and another arrives with timely relief. As a man, a brother, a fellow soldier and sufferer, who has overcome the world—Jesus comes in at our cry, and renews our sinking courage. He may seem to delay. An hour of severe conflict seems a day to the alarmed and fearful spirit; but at the proper time, and in the best way, He will appear. Human friends may neglect us in our extremity, but He hath said “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” so that we may boldly say “the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

From this subject, so encouraging to our hope and confidence, let Christians observe, that their safety consists, not in being exempted from temptation, but in the ability and readiness of the Saviour to succour them under the trial. Well, therefore, may they “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” But let no one depend on His succour, who does not daily seek His aid. If, in the season of conflict, we neglect prayer, look to others for deliverance, or trust to ourselves for victory, defeat will follow. When the apostle tells us in another place, that “we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but who was, though sinless, tempted in all points like as we are,” he adds, “let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.” We enter no region of trial where He has not gone before and beyond us; and if we cleave to Him, as our elder brother, He will bring us in triumph over every foe.

H. FLINT.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

Acts xvi. 34.—*“And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”*

THIS verse with its connexion, describes the change which had taken place in a heathen man, who, a few moments ago, was at the point of committing suicide. Through God's great mercy, his mad intention was frustrated. Rebuked by his prisoners, tremblingly he listened to the words of life, and immediately believed. The same hour of the night, he took these servants of God, Paul and Silas, and washed the stripes which had been inflicted upon them by order of the magistrates; and professed his faith in Christ by receiving the ordinance of baptism. Thenceforth he was, in the common phrase of the apostles and primitive disciples, a new man, a believer, a Christian in the spiritual and true meaning of the word.

To the inquiry—what it is to become a Christian, we shall now devote the present discourse, that is, that change in the mind and character, which takes place at the commencement of a Christian life? We consider the change simply as an event in the history of the man, and the question is, *what is it?*

This question I would answer, not by consulting this or that man's creed, but by looking directly into the Scriptures, and see what they teach. We will stand or fall by their testimony.

Be it observed, that I speak of the nature of the change that makes a man a Christian, and of that only. I do not inquire into the power and influence by which it is effected. I ask not, how is it? or, why is it? but simply, what is it? I see the fact. The drunkard has become sober, the ungodly religious, the Sabbath-breaker loves and keeps the Sabbath-day, and the man once depressed and laden with sin, the

slave of every fleshly lust that wars against the soul, now abandoning a course of life so profane and impious, and seeking after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. This is the change; the fact, what is it?

I. According to the Scriptures, a Christian is one who *believes the Gospel*. "He that believeth shall be saved." "We walk by faith, not by sight." "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was the plain answer which Paul gave to the penitent before him in the prison. It is, however, unnecessary to repeat the numerous passages which sustain this doctrine. They all amount to this: the true Christian takes the doctrines and precepts of Christianity as his rule of life, and depends on the atonement and intercession of Christ for pardon and eternal salvation. He receives it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. To such a divine Saviour he commits his dearest, his eternal interests, fully persuaded that He is able to keep that which He has committed to Him against the day of His appearance. This surrender of the soul to Christ for all saving purposes: this living on Christ as a Redeemer and Advocate is the work and act of faith, and whoever does this is a Christian. He has experienced that change which the jailor of Philippi underwent on that memorable night when "Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God in the inner prison," in the hearing of other prisoners. This then is the characteristic of the change which makes a man a true Christian. He might have been one in name, and even in creed before; but he is one in reality now. This is the one point wherein he differs from other men, and from his former self.

II. A Christian is a *penitent sinner*. To him, and to none but him, belong the blessings pronounced by our Lord on the poor in spirit and the mourner in Zion. The most eminent believers have always been the most humble. In

what terms of unfeigned humiliation, does St. Paul speak of himself—"as less than the least of all saints,"—as having been "a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious," and with how much meaning does he testify—"this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." This is the poverty of spirit—the mourning, the weakness, which Christ pronounces blessed. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The Christian feels and is ever ready to acknowledge himself a sinner. He stands before God as a rebel surrendering himself, and trusting wholly to the mercy of his Sovereign. He thinks meanly of himself on account of his transgressions, and strives against the innate pollution of his soul. This is another feature in the change that has passed upon him and is a special and distinctive element of the religious principle of the Christian life.

III. A Christian is a man who freely yields himself to be *governed and sanctified by the Spirit of God*. It is a charge brought by an apostle against the ungodly, that they always "resist the Holy Ghost;" while, on the contrary, they who are in Christ Jesus, "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The one minds the things of the flesh, the others the things of the Spirit. One of the first enquiries of an awakened man is—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" So did the three thousand penitents on the day of Pentecost; so did Saul of Tarsus when the voice from heaven struck him to the earth; so did the jailor whose conversion to Christ the text relates. The will of God, and not the opinion of the world, or the passions of his simple nature—is now the governing rule of his actions and motives.

Herein appears another distinguishing feature of the great moral change in question. The subject of this spiritual transformation, has yielded the citadel of his heart to be occupied and garrisoned by the Spirit of God and of Christ, and thus, in the expressive language of Scripture, the body is become the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Such then was the process by which the jailor became a Christian. And whatever there was peculiar in his case, something analagous to it takes place in the experience of all who are "passed from death to life," so far as the essential fact is concerned. There are various expressions by which this change—or transition from one state to another—is described by the sacred writers.

It is sometimes called, *coming to Christ*. Thus our Lord said: "all that the Father giveth to me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It was His solemn rebuke to the captious and unbelieving Jews: "ye will not come to me that ye might have life." The words mean, that they would not receive Him as the Messiah, the Prophet, the Redeemer, and the Saviour of the world. The coming to Christ is the act of the mind which ensures the blessings of salvation—the not coming is to reject the mercy of God, and virtually to choose death rather than life.

Sometimes the change of which we have spoken, is called *conversion*. This, in the Scripture use of the term, signifies the turning of a sinner to God. Thus the degenerate house of Israel was addressed: "turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" So the apostles used the phrase—"be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And our Lord likewise said, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." The word is highly suggestive. It teaches us, that in becoming a Christian, a man abandons his self-righteousness, self-will, and self-seeking; and in contrition, humility, and ardent desire after holiness, casts himself on Jesus Christ as an Almighty Saviour, who rejects none that thus believe in Him.

There is, however, one term used in describing this spiritual work on the heart, which we must not overlook. It is called *a being born again*: born of God, and being born of the Spirit. These strong expressions are employed to shew the greatness and comprehensiveness of the change.

It is no mere figure of speech—it is a solemn reality. Nor can the terms be too strong for the purpose. The regeneration of a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, is a greater miracle than any other recorded in Scripture. What change can be greater than that in which a man comes for the first time and for ever under the controlling power of things invisible and eternal—that in which he learns to hope for forgiveness and salvation through the blood of God's own Son—that in which he joins himself to the standard and cause of Christ as the captain of his salvation—that in which he joyfully and without reserve, yields himself to be governed and sanctified by the indwelling Spirit of God? What change can be equal to this? It introduces him to a state of reconciliation and friendship with the King Eternal. It makes him a child of God—an heir of heaven—beloved by Him before whom angels veil their faces—guarded and guided by that power which sways the universe. All this, and infinitely more, is included in the regeneration that makes a man a Christian. Is it not a new birth—a new era of life—the dawning of a new existence?

This now, brethren, is the change to which you are called. It is that repentance unto life to which the God of grace has been so long striving to bring you. It is that great and essential renovation of your inner nature, without which you are a lost and ruined spirit. In a word, it is that conversion of the soul to God to which all the disclosures of His word, the dealings of His Providence, the monitions and pleadings of the Holy Spirit, are continually pointing you. It is just that change through which the Philippian jailor passed in that hour in which he believed. And the return of a rebel to his allegiance—of obeying the truth—of loving virtue and holiness—of admiring and practising beneficence, are not more obviously reasonable than that the rugged and unholy heart should be created anew, to make it meet for heaven.

J. E. EVERITT.

THE SINNER'S CHOICE.

John xviii. 40.—“*Then cried they all again, saying, not this man but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*”

I do not select these words to speak particularly of the conduct of the Jews. It is of little avail to our benefit to reproach them. I suppose them to be no exceptions to mankind ; but a fair and distinct exhibition of the human heart. Their opposition to Jesus was but the natural opposition, which conscious iniquity generates to the light and power of excellence. They hated Him not for himself but for His character. Their aversion to this, was the simple result of man's native dislike to purity and holiness. Their obliquity of purpose, and cruelty of spirit did not arise from their being Jews, but from their being men. The reception which they thus gave to human perfection, personified in the character and life of Jesus Christ, was no peculiarity in their circumstances. Had He chosen Rome or Athens for the scene of His manifestation and His mighty works, the result would have been undoubtedly the same ; nor is there the slightest reason to imagine the contrary. This rejection of Christ was no mere incident of that particular age. In the attainments and cultivation of the human intellect, it was far from a barbarous age. In the inventions of a luxurious taste for man's indulgences, it was greatly the reverse. The same claims and character would have experienced the same repulse in every age, and in all circumstances of human history.

I did not select these words, therefore, to speak particularly of the conduct of the Jews. They are to be viewed as the expression of *the choice of a carnal mind*. They

will be found to be the actual expression of multitudes around us every day. And the worst result of their first utterance by the Jews, becomes their everlasting result, in the case and experience of thousands, of the state and choice of whose minds they are now the declaration. It is under this view that I propose to consider our text ; a view which leaves its circumstances behind, to present its principles ; a view which brings out our own concern with the transaction which it records, as well as that of the first actors in the scene. In pursuing this view, I remark,

I. The great and peculiar sin of man under the Christian dispensation, is the rejection of the authority and offers of a Saviour, for the sake of some opposing interest or proposition. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed, men are not only called upon to choose whom they will serve, and with whom they will serve, and with whom they will be identified, but in the actual necessity of circumstances also, they do make this choice. Jesus insists upon an absolute union and co-partnership with him, to be regulated according to his single will, as the proper and the only allowable course for all who listen to His word. It cannot be doubted, that he who immediately embraces the proposal which is thus made to him from heaven, who submits himself to the Divine governance, who, as a redeemed sinner, casts in his lot with the Redeemer who hath ransomed him with His blood, and enters into the required partnership with Him, has made a distinct choice. He is henceforth identified in all his interests, efforts, and hopes, with the gracious friend who hath bought him with a price. He will abide with him. If he conquers, he will partake of the glory of his triumph. But it can no more justly be doubted, that he who does not thus embrace the principles and offers of the Saviour in His gospel, though he make no positive resolution to the contrary, nor is conscious of any thing in his state of mind, but a simple unwillingness to become yet a disciple of Jesus, under the influence of which, he goes from the gospel

message still unsubdued and unconverted, has actually made his choice of that stand and service which Jesus opposes. Whether this shall be a permanent choice does not depend entirely upon himself. God may give him no opportunity to reverse it. And for the time being, and to the utmost extent of his own power of determination, it is a positive and unqualified refusal of the Saviour's invitation, and an equally unqualified rejection of His authority. It is a distinct and positive choice by the sinner's mind and heart, of which the direct expression is, "Not this man, but Barabbas ;" not Christ and His salvation, or not now at least, but something which opposes them. It is Barabbas still. It is the direct and designed opponent of the Saviour. There may be a thousand extenuations suggested. Barabbas may be refined, and clothed, and made respectable, but it is Barabbas still. It is an object which is in appointed and selected opposition to Christ, which has been chosen in preference to Christ, and for the sake of which Christ has been refused. 'Here immovably remains the point of the character, of the responsibility, and of the condemnation. The act of the man has been a voluntary choice. The position of the man is, that he has made his choice. The guilt and the punishment of the man rest also upon this simple fact. He has chosen death rather than life. He has preferred Barabbas to Christ.

II. I would illustrate this choice in some instances which display it. There are many such. I see the young man following the pleasures of sense, and for these, despising and driving from him the claims of piety. He walks in the delusive paths of sinful indulgence. He follows the heated guidance of unlawful appetite. He drinks continually of that vainly sweetened cup, which in his bitter remorse, he as continually nauseates. He runs to riot with the noisy and sensual. He chooses these baser gratifications for his present portion ; and lays down his head, to slumber for destruction, in the lap of gross enjoyment. For these he

rejects the Saviour's invitations. He counts all religion as a series of contemptable austerities. He hardly persuades himself to be respectful to its ministrations. If in public, or in solitude, his conscience ever becomes awakened ; if God speaks to him in anger, in the deep recesses of his own soul, he turns from the alarm with undisguised aversion, and rushes again into the madness of his indulgences, to bring himself up from a meddling Deity. What is his whole conduct, but the unceasing brazen boast, "Who is the Almighty that I should serve him ?" What is the expression of every act of his life, but the declared, yes, the vehemently declared choice, "Not this man, but Barabbas ?" I see the giddy daughter of vanity and fashion. Her whole thoughts are occupied with the changing scenes of a world the fashion of which passeth away. She lives for a vain exhibition of herself. The low vanity of outward decoration, the poor exhibition of arranging her tinsel with taste, the round of giddy society, the feverish excitement of the dance, and the gay assembly, shall I say the theatre ?—no, this is almost too disreputable for my present supposition—all these occupy and rule her affections and her mind. For these, the glories of eternity are vilely cast away. For these the offers of the gospel are despised. The world can have the thoughts but Christ must not. The mirror and the novel can command the time, but the Bible cannot. And the intellect, and the affections, and the life of the soul, are all frittered away in this ceaseless earthly giddiness. What though there is nothing which the world calls vice ? What though refinement and elegance have adorned and dignified the whole scene ; and this daughter of folly is to be led on to her immolation, ornamented with garlands and surrounded by joyous strains. Is it not hostility to Christ ? Is it not direct aversion to His service that constitutes the principle here ? For these vanities, she has cast away the favour of her God. For these, she exchanges the blessed hope and portion which the Saviour gives. These are but the representatives of her refusal

of his love; and in her devotion to these, she is daily shouting in her insensate giddiness, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

I see the man of business, in his neglect of godliness, for the following of gain; devoting all the energies of his mind to the amassing of wealth; with his head bowed down to the earth, his eyes fixed upon his earthly goods, and his mind digging into possible mines of treasure for himself. But with him all is as if there were no God, and no future eternity, for he acknowledges no authority but present interest, and asks for no portion but the present world. His soul is mammonized completely. The desire of his heart is simply for present gain. Now, why do you tell me that he is respectable, and moral, and upright, and domestic, and affectionate? What is all this? It would be as much to the purpose, to tell me that he clothed himself from the winter's cold, and guarded his appetite from the approach of want. I tell you, his unconverted heart rejects a Saviour. His proud will refuses submission to God. His carnal mind is upon earthly things. All his boasted excellencies are but the glitterings of his selfishness. They have their own reward, but they can expect none from a God who has been entirely forgotten. For this busy, accumulating life, he rejects all the admonitions and offers of the gospel. He drives away from him the demands of the Redeemer, and of his own soul. He passes his time amidst all the privileges of the gospel, keeping and cherishing an unconverted heart. The whole language of his life, and if you press upon him the obligations of piety, the language of his lips, is, "Not this man, but Barabbas." I see the self-righteous man, weighing his imaginary deeds of virtue in his own partial scales, and striking a balance in his own favour, his pride of character will not stoop under the acknowledgment of sin, his confidence in his own worth, forbids his seeking a shelter in the righteousness of another. I press upon him the charge of guilt in the sight of God, but to every admonition he turns a deaf ear, and knitting

his brow, utters the determination of his heart, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

I see the healthful deferring all regard to God, and care of the soul, till sickness shall knock at their door, and death invade their dwelling. I see the young, refusing to offer unto God the morning sacrifice, and looking forward to the time when the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and the remnant of life flickers in the weakness of old age, as the season when the wants of the soul shall be considered, and a provision for the peace of eternity shall be made.

Instances might be multiplied, but let these suffice. They all result in the very same point, a refusal of the favour and the promises of the Redeemer, for something which is preferred in opposition to Him. They are in all cases, instances of the same choice of a carnal mind. They bring upon each individual who makes this choice, the same solemn condemnation of those who reject the light, and prefer the darkness to it, because their deeds are evil.

III. Consider how fearful is the guilt, and alarming the danger of this choice! "Barabbas was a robber." And is not Barabbas a robber still? Whether the selected alternative be giddiness, profligacy, or self-righteous morality, Barabbas is a robber. And all that is precious and important for the soul is stolen from it. It is the happiness of eternity of which it is robbed. And of what is it that you are thus plundered? I answer—of the favour of God for ever, of all peace with Him, and all hope before Him. Yes; dreadful loss! A world which cannot help you—but scorns and deceives you, has robbed you of Him whose favour is life, whose frown is death. You are robbed of the compassionate intercession of a Saviour. There was a time, when, through many days and years, Jesus pitied you, and invited you to Himself. But when He called, you refused; when He stretched out His hand, you did not regard it. You would none of His counsel; you despised all His reproof. He pleaded for you, and with you, with

great long-suffering and forbearance, that you might be rescued and saved. But you rejected all His offers; you disregarded His warnings; you despised His mercy. When He stood before you in all the attractions of overflowing kindness, in all the exciting power of His disinterested grief and suffering, you turned away from Him, to a waiting robber that was thrust before you, and madly said, "Not this man, but Barabbas." And now you stand in judgment in all the aggravation of your guilt, and there is no advocate to plead for you, no interceding High Priest to cry, spare him, for I have found a ransom." The Lord Jesus stands aloof from your calamity; and leaves you to contend with the strangling serpents of eternal remorse; and there is no hand of grace to grasp you now, no soothing voice to whisper words of peace. The Barabbas, whom you chose, has robbed you of your Saviour, and you must abide your choice. I ask, what will all the perishing things which you have chosen avail you in your future hour of need? What will you carry away with you from this vain world, for the love of which you have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ? Oh! consider that change, that solemn change, in which mortality is swallowed up by enduring life. When your body returns naked to the earth, to say to corruption, "Thou art my sister." What does it carry away with it? Its appetites have been fed; its lusts have been indulged; its appearance has been adorned. But now all these things have passed away. The cultivated and ornamented form is cold and mouldering in its bed of darkness. But where is the soul? Its welfare is for ever gone. It is rejected and driven from the presence of God for evermore.

Such, my brethren, is the necessary result of your choice, when Christ, in the blessings of His salvation, is rejected, for the love of vain and perishing things. Oh! I would solemnly and affectionately warn you against the indulgence of this carnal mind. It is death, it will be death for ever.

I would therefore stand by the bleeding side of Jesus, and beg you, do not ungratefully refuse Him, to choose a robber. Oh! consider all His sufferings in your behalf; His humiliation under your burden of guilt; His agonies in bearing the chastisement of your peace. Behold Him under the curse, that you might not be cursed; dying, that you might live; rising, that you might reign for ever. Behold Him in heaven making intercessions for transgressors, and will you, can you, turn a deaf ear to all the solicitations of His mercy.

In a word as my last request, I would persuade you by the momentous issues of eternity, and beg you, do not lose your crown in them, for anything which perisheth here below. There is set before you an open door, and you are invited to enter in and be safe. Behold the heavenly rest which is set before you; the everlasting recompense of reward, which is freely offered as the purchase of a Saviour's blood; and do not cast them from you for the temptations of sin. God waiteth to be gracious, when you shall be found believing in His Son. Oh! come, then, unto Him, take His yoke upon you, and you shall find rest unto your souls.

S. H. TYNG, D.D.

THE DYING THIEF.

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 Luke xxiii. 42.—“*And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*”
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THE scenes of Calvary should be in our daily and everlasting remembrance. The branches cannot flourish if separated from the parent stem; nor the edifice be stable unless the foundation be firm; so neither can we be fruitful in deeds of piety, but as we glory in the cross of Christ.

Could we, however, for a moment forget our own personal interest in the dying of the Lord Jesus, there is in the event itself, and in the circumstances attending it, an interest unparalleled in the history of the world. In the early morning of that ever memorable day, the people were flocking and settling like a cloud on the top and declivities of the mountain, to attend "this troubled feast of death." And as "the man of sorrows" came slowly up the hill, bearing His cross, unutterable emotions must have been awakened in many a breast. The doctors of the temple were there to see the man, who twenty years before, had astonished them with His understanding and answers, though then a child. The traffickers in the house of prayer were there, to see the man who had dared to drive them from the sacred precincts which they were desecrating by their covetousness and theft. The people of Gadara were there, to gaze on the stranger by whom they supposed they had lost their swine. The lawyers and priests, the Pharisees and Scribes were there, to witness the agonies of the rustic Preacher who had presumed to expose their hypocrisies to the naked eye of the world—who had designated them a generation of serpents—whited sepulchres—children of their father the devil—and candidates for the damnation of hell! Many were there whose strength He had succoured by miraculous food, who could now see Him faint, perhaps without a sigh; and the daughters of Jerusalem were there, to bewail Him with tears of pity, which were more needed for themselves than for Him. And little children were there, to see nailed to the wood those arms by which they had been taken up and blessed! A group of spectators, once palsied and maimed, came to the scene, to see Him mangled by whom they had been restored to perfect soundness; and men once blind came to see His eyes closed in death, from whom they had received the blessing of sight. Tell us, Martha and Mary, as ye stand there supported by that brother who had been dead four days; and thou, widow

of Nain, sustained by that son who sat up and began to speak when Jesus met the bier at the gate,—tell us what are your emotions, as ye see Him who is the resurrection and the life, on His way to the tomb! And thou, blessed among women—but enough! we ask not after a mother's anguish. This is the time when the prediction of the venerable Simeon was fulfilled: “a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.”

And now, behold this wonderful sufferer on the cross! The earth is quaking, the rocks are rending, dead saints are rising, and heaven has wrapped the earth in mourning! Are James and John drinking of the cup mingled for their Lord? Not yet. Is Peter following Him to prison and to death? Not yet. No, the Saviour is “treading the winepress alone, and of the people there is none with Him,” only on either side a thief. The rude rabble, instigated it may be by Jewish rulers, wag their heads, and rail, “ah! thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross.” The exulting priests and officials mock, “He saved others, Himself He cannot save.” Jesus prays, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” One malefactor reviles, “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.” The other cries, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” At length the deed of blood is “finished;” the Saviour gives up the ghost. The centurion who had the charge of the soldiery, heard the last words of the dying Redeemer, witnessed His death-struggle, and struck with the deepest awe, he exclaimed, “truly this was the Son of God!” And now the crowd disperses, the pallid corpse must abide its appointed time on “the bloody tree,” and the spectators who had “come together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.”

Such is the story of the cross. Other events there have been of mighty interest; but this outweighs them all. Distinguished in the counsels of heaven above all other

scenes ever beheld by angels or men, this tragical episode in the history of human crime, is destined to arouse the attention of a slumbering world. And while every part is full of interest, and deserving our most devout contemplation ; we must at this time confine our thoughts to the Saviour, and the thief who was that day " caught up into Paradise."

I. Observe the reverence of the petition. " Lord remember me." Whom does he call Lord ? The babe of Bethlehem and of the manger ; the child hunted by Herod ; the son of Joseph the carpenter ; the itinerant Galilean ; the unpatronized preacher of heavenly truth ; the object of Jewish hate and priestly contempt ; the despised Nazarene. This is the man whom he addresses as Lord. It was a man betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, deserted with one solitary exception by the rest, and forsaken in his mortal conflict by God His Father. He was now nailed to the wood as on a level with the most vile and execrable of the nation. Will you, crucified thief, make account of such an one ? Can he help *thee* ? Is not praying to him adding to thy sins ? What ! call *him* Lord ? Yes, it is well, it is no mistake ; it is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Maker and Judge of mankind, before whom we must shortly stand to receive our eternal award. Are we prepared for the interview ?

II. Lord *remember* me. How remember ? Not his crimes, nor his follies, but his wants on the verge of the grave and eternity. He would fain be remembered with the favour which God bears unto His people. What is it to remember with favour ? Ask that grief-stricken mother who watches over her infected babe, till exhausted nature sinks to sleep, and wakes up from a troubled slumber to see if all is still, and the remedies properly and duly administered, and then falls to sleep again, only to dream of her darling's recovery or death. She can tell you what it is to remember. And ask that other woman, who is waking during the stormy night, and praying to Him, who holds the winds in

the hollow of his hand, and rules the billows of the deep, that He would preserve her sailor-boy, or the husband of her youth, exposed to all the tossings and perils of the ocean. That mother and that wife can tell you what it is to remember with favour ; her affections and her fears render her breast as tumultuous as the sea itself. And many a widow whose tears in summer refresh the sod of *his* grave, and gems the cold stone in the frosts of winter that hides from human view the dear remains of one never to be forgotten. Such is the remembrance for which the penitent malefactor prayed. But will the eternal God thus remember the vile and the worthless? He will, if they seek Him in the spirit of the sufferer, whose petition we are considering. There are no limits to the power of his grace, no fathomable depths to the riches of his mercy. Unbelief alone excludes from the kingdom of God. In a season of darkness, Zion said, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me ;" but He replied "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

III. Lord remember *me*—who is this *me* ? What felon is that who presumes to ask a place in the memory of Immanuel ? All the account we have of him is, that he was an evil doer, a convicted and condemned thief, that he died a true penitent, and went to paradise. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." He was essentially like us, "sold under sin." He had, it may be presumed, fewer religious advantages than we possess. Perhaps he had not a praying mother to teach him the fear of the Lord : no pious father's example and counsel to guide him into the path of purity and peace. If so, we are not surprised at the forfeiture of his life. "A child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame." His character warrants the presumption that he did not reverence the Sabbath, nor read the Scriptures, nor attend the house of God, nor ever bow his knee in prayer. It is highly probable that his

parents were irreligious; that they were strangers to all holy feelings, that they disesteemed the people of God, and like parents like son. Hence temptations to sin were multiplied about his path, so that he sat in the seat of the scorner, and went with her whose steps take hold on hell. It is not strange that he was ruined, a neglected, spoiled child "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." Untaught, unadmonished, suffered to have his own way, he would follow the uncurbed passions of his fallen nature, adding sin to sin and proceeding from one excess to another, till he is arrested by the law, and consigned to the ignominy of crucifixion. And such a man is but a sample of the greater number of the men that fill our jails, and disgrace our country.

IV. Lord remember me *when thou comest into thy kingdom*. He does not ask to be delivered from the condemnation under which he was suffering the penalty of death. He asks for no exemption from the agonies of the cross. He says nothing of his pains. He admits the justice of the sentence that dooms him and his comrade to so bitter and torturous a mode of punishment. No, he has a larger request; so large that one might think he had met with the divine command with promise—"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." There was strong faith. How amidst the opening of the everlasting gates that the King of Glory might enter in, and the countless recollections which at that joyful moment would throng the breast of the Redeemer, could he, a poor, wretched and guilty thief, think to be, and pray to be remembered by such a Being, in whose sight the nations of the earth are but dust? It would seem unparralled presumption to present such a request. And yet it was perfectly proper, for stained as had been his soul it was now redeemed, and washed in the blood of Him who hung by his side. The angels now struck their golden harps over a penitent sinner; and that same sinner went the same afternoon to the realms of the blessed, wither Jesus himself had just gone. Most cordial was the welcome with which he

was greeted by the natives and other inhabitants of the skies ; and there he has been a welcome guest for more than eighteen hundred years, a king and a priest unto God, not for an instant forgotten by Him on whom devolves the government of the universe. " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways are past finding out ! "

To apply this subject. We remark *firstly*, that a knowledge of Christ crucified is necessary to salvation. Well was it for the dying culprit that he met with the Saviour at the place of execution, or was in some way or other brought into an acquaintance with Him. But for this his immortal spirit had been lost. Oh ! the multitudes who live in the midst of Sabbaths and sanctuaries, and the diffusion of the Scriptures, yet " love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," are in extreme danger of perdition. The suffering, dying, yet contrite and believing thief will rise up in judgment and condemn them for their unbelief !

We remark *secondly*, the instance now considered is the only case recorded in the Scriptures of conversion at the hour of death. We have this one, that none may *despair*, only this one, that none may *presume*. God is a Sovereign ; and shall not the judge of all the earth do right ? One thief was taken, the other left. And what if He, whose grace is sufficient for all, should swear in his wrath, that you, whose privileges are great, but whose hearts are stubborn and refuse the overtures of heaven's love, should never enter into His rest ? Is there, would there be in such an awful denunciation unrighteousness with God ? God forbid. I say nothing of the eternal destiny of the heathen who dwell in the darkness of savage life. Sad is their condition ! I speak of heathen at home—of heathen in the very centre of evangelization, who have no fear of God before their eyes, and as little sense of vital religion as the barbarian on whose ears the sweet tidings of redemption never fall. That such should perish—fearfully and eternally

perish—is the just reward of their impiety and impenitence. The blessed God does then no wrong. “Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,” is the cause of their condemnation.

The last observation we offer to your notice is, that men mistake in their efforts to have their names immortalized. Ah! in a few years from this hour, the wave of oblivion will roll over our memory, and leave not a wreck behind. We write our names in the family Bible, that they may be handed down to our posterity—but are they enrolled in the Book of God’s remembrance? You obtain the portrait, or miniature likeness of your friend, that it may be hung in your chamber or worn in your bosom; but do you carry the image of God in your heart, and have you prayed that your name might be engraved on the palms of His hands. You are, it may be, ambitious of forming a large acquaintance, but let me tell you, that one friend is enough, if that friend be Christ. Was not He enough for the felon who hung at His right hand? My hearers, have you made Him your friend? You have seen the victims of fatal sickness lying on a bed from which the poor body never arose, give to the dear ones weeping around them some small memento of their dying love, with the request—“When you look on this, remember me.” One man writes a book, or plants a tree, or erects a pillar, or builds a mansion, and calls it after his own name for a memorial; but alas! many who do these things never felt one serious and earnest longing to have their name inscribed on a pillar in the temple of God. My friends, is yours there? Those who would be unforgotten, must be good. It is the righteous man who is to be held in “everlasting remembrance.” The Saviour won for Himself an eternal weight of glory by giving His labours and His life for the salvation of the lost: and the disciple who strives to resemble his Lord in espousing the cause of the poor, in instructing the ignorant, in relieving the destitute, in visiting the sick, and in sheltering the oppressed, will,

not for his work's sake, but as the reward of grace, be with Him where He is to behold His glory, and share His triumph in the realms of eternal purity and joy.

Once more I ask, have you, my brethren, offered the prayer of the thief? We are sinners as well as he—do we pray as he did? Have we been made sensible of our guilt and danger? Have the terrors of the Lord taken hold of us, and the arrows of the Almighty drunk up our spirits? The prayerless may desire that God would forget them; but that is impossible. He remembers His enemies no less than His friends, and He will make an everlasting distinction at the last day between those who have served Him here, and those who have served Him not. His Book of remembrance records the names of all.

Let then the prayer in the text be ours. When we walk in darkness and see no light; when temptation assails, and the old serpent would wrap his folds around us, Lord, remember us, for thou wast thyself tempted, and art able to succour. When friends forsake us; when we are homeless strangers in a strange land, Lord, remember us then, for thou wast thyself once the homeless, destitute, and forsaken man of sorrows. And when we reach the end of life's weary journey, and death presses his cold hand on our hearts till they can beat no longer, O Lord, remember us in that trying hour, and "suffer none of the bitter pains of eternal death to fall from thee." And when that morn shall rise on which the sleep of the dead will be broken by the archangels' trumpet, and the funeral knell of this world is tolling on the shores of eternity; when we stand before the Great White Throne, and every action, word, and thought shall be scrutinized by the Judge Eternal; and when the assembled nations shall hear the final sentence that will consign them to heaven or to hell—then, O Lord, remember us with the same pity and grace which said to the dying thief—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Grant this, O Lord, for thy mercy's sake. Amen.

W. STRONG.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Mark xvi. 6.—*“And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen: He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him.”*

SUCH were the words of consolation which an angel from heaven, in the guise of a young man, clothed in a long white garment, and sitting within the empty sepulchre, addressed to the two Marys, who had come, at the rising of the sun, to anoint the body of their beloved Lord with sweet spices. The twilight of the morning, the solemnity of the place, the appearance of a stranger, all concurred to strike a degree of fear into their minds; and with female timidity, which threatened for a moment to subdue their affection, and turn them from the execution of their purpose, they seemed inclined to retreat from the scene. The messenger from the skies saw their confusion and alarm; and perfectly aware of the object of their visit, he spoke to them in accents of angelic tenderness, to allay their apprehensions, and restore their confidence. He therefore said unto them, “be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen: He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him.”

This is a wondrous theme. The sepulchre was open; it had yielded up its almighty tenant. Jesus had returned from Paradise, and again clothed Himself in humanity. A mighty angel had descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb. One of the evangelists tells us, that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. Poor mortality could not endure the sight of one whose wings had been dipped “in the river of God”—of one, who, glorious as he was, was

only a shadow of the "high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity." "The keepers trembled with fear, and fell to the earth as dead men." But a voice of love assured the women that *they* had no cause for alarm. The illustrious messenger told them that He whom they sought had risen. "He is not here," said the angel stranger. No power, not even the combined cunning and force of men and devils, could detain Him here. And with the knowledge of His own predictions, could you expect that the glorious orb of day would light up the eastern sky, before the Sun of Righteousness had risen upon a sinful world? Did He not tell you more than once that He must be crucified, buried, and the third day rise again? Why, then, seek ye the living among the dead. He is not here: He is risen. Come near and see for yourselves. Let Peter come in and examine the sepulchre. He will find it vacant. Here lie the linen clothes as sweet and as unfaded as when Joseph of Arimathea purchased them for the burial. Here too, is the napkin that was wrapped around His head, carefully folded and laid in a place by itself. Come Mary, weeping Mary, and thou other Mary, stoop down and look into the sepulchre. He is not within. O! if you could only see as angels see, you might behold your risen Lord just behind you, appearing to mortal eyes like a peasant gardener. He is risen—there He stands. Go quickly and tell His brethren. Go, hasten them into Galilee, for thither He is instantly going, and there all His disciples and friends may see Him.

I. My brethren, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the corner-stone of the Christian faith. All His miracles are weak evidences of the Messiahship of our Lord compared with this. St. Paul regarded it as the all in all of the gospel. He says, "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." And again, "if Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The triumph of the Saviour over the grave was His own

appointed sign of the truthfulness of His divine mission. "Destroy this temple,"—this temple of my body, said He to the unbelieving Jews, "and in three days I will raise it again." The angel that addressed the women at the sepulchre, reminds them of this—"He is risen; *as He said:*" that is, as He said He would on the the third day. Thus spake St. Peter on the memorable day of Pentecost—"Him hath God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we believe "Him to be the Son of God with power."

We thus see, that this article of our Christian faith, is clearly established in the sacred scriptures. These teach us, that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified and slain, returned to life, reanimated the same body which hung on the cross, and shewed Himself alive after His passion, by many infallible signs. We rest our faith on the authority of the sacred record—on the united testimony of a cloud of witnesses, whose character, position, and competency to affirm the fact of the resurrection, are utterly unexceptionable; and throw to the wind the cavils of the infidel, who, while he rejects the clear and conclusive evidence of revelation, on other points readily admits the greatest absurdities.

Take away this precious truth of a risen Saviour, and you extinguish the beacon-light that illumines the world. Prove, if you can, that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, and man would never smile more. Prove that Jesus Christ saw corruption, and you would make the grave a prison-house indeed. But, blessed be God, the evidence of His resurrection is as clear as a sunbeam. To the Roman soldiers—to the stone—the sepulchre—the seal, we may make our appeal. While we have the evidence of angels—of pious women—of five hundred brethren at one time who saw Him—of St. Paul—of the incredulous Thomas—of the gift of the Holy Spirit working wonders of mercy in the hearts of men, we will cling to the doctrine of a risen

Saviour; we will neither yield this key-stone of the web of Christianity, nor sacrifice to the prejudices of a proud infidelity, the cherished hope of a blessed immortality.

II. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is full of comfort to His friends. It involves and secures theirs. As He died and rose again, "even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The same Spirit that raised Him up from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies. "Christ is now risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep." "Because I live, ye shall live also," are the assuring words of Him who cannot lie. "He that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die:" that is, shall never perish in eternal death.

This, my brethren, is a solid basis for the hope of every child of God. How richly calculated to bring consolation to dying saints and their sorrowing survivors! No one is now required to mourn without comfort, or visit the grave of a beloved friend to weep there. Christians, have you not read, "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord?" Your Christian kindred sleep in Jesus, though consigned to the mouldering corruption of the tomb. Their dust may be scattered to the four corners of the earth, but He that calleth all the stars by their names, and numbereth the hairs of the head, can, in a moment, collect the particles which composed their mortal frame at the period of their dissolution, and put them into possession of a kingdom that shall endure for ever. While we are clothed in sable to show our grief, they are arrayed in white to denote their purity and joy. While we are stricken and bowed down, they are exalted and triumphant. They are gone to their rest. The days of their mourning are ended. They have ceased from their labours. The gushings of sorrow are all hushed, and they are for ever with the Lord.

Hard it is for nature to take the comfort which such a doctrine is fitted to yield. With the full conviction that our departed friends are happy, yet are there instincts

within us which will not readily resign them. It is not an easy thing to give up those we love, to the cold grave—to see them no more on the shores of mortality. It is sad to be an orphan! It is sad to have the hearth desolate, when death snaps asunder those whom God has joined together as husband and wife, parent and child! Ah! there are many affecting spectacles in this world. Who can behold a young and widowed mother committing to the dust her only child; and returning to her solitary home to be reminded by every little toy, or the laid aside garment of her lost treasure, of the dear one who will need them no more? Alas! the sweet little prattler that was wont to beguile the mother's tedious hours of solitude, is heard in her dwelling no more.

We have said, and said truly, that these are affecting scenes. But there is one more affecting still. I refer to the sorrow that is without hope. It is not for man to pronounce sentence of everlasting condemnation on any of the human race. Still, with the plain and positive declarations of our Lord and the sacred writers with respect to the impenitent and unbelieving before our eyes—bitter is the grief of that Christian parent, who commits the mortal remains of an ungodly child to the dust, in prospect of his rising to shame and everlasting contempt! The sorrows of such an heart are intolerable.

We survey not the sleeping places of the dead in hopeless gloom. Our thoughts settle not in despair as we look at the silent receptacles of those who have died in the faith and hope of the gospel. A voice—soft, sweet, and comforting, seems to be heard from the heap of dust, saying: “my father, my mother, my child, I will see you again. Come up hither to me, when your body drops into the earth, and we shall meet to part no more. Follow me in the regeneration. ¶ Cleave to the cross of the Redeemer. Copy His example. Repose on the merits of His sacrifice. And then, when your course is ended, we shall mingle with the

spirits of the just before the throne, in songs of joy for ever and ever."

The grave has had its triumph. Its victory has been nearly universal. With three exceptions, it holds the whole family of man; and yearns for all the generations yet to come. It laughs to scorn the art and strength of man: mocks the devices of the physician: and levels without distinction the whole race of Adam. No earthly power can turn the tide as it rolls towards that all absorbing gulf. Thither all are borne. But there is light amidst the darkness that hides the process within. On the brink of the all-devouring vortex the Christian may stand and shout, "O grave, where is thy victory?" On the illustrious morning of the day we now commemorate, Jesus conquered the grave; and taking the key from the grasp of the "king of terrors," He "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." The tomb holds the dust of the saints but as a deposit. We shall rise, for Christ is risen!

B. F. TAYLOR.

HOPE ARISING FROM THE SAVIOUR'S RESURRECTION.



I. Peter i. 3. 4.—*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."*



IN this passage of sacred scripture we are taught, that to praise and bless God, is the natural consequence of due reflection upon His abundant goodness; that the whole scheme of salvation through a redeemer, is founded in the

divine mercy that Christians are rescued from their natural state, from the apprehension of misery and death eternal, and are begotten again to a lively hope of immortal joy ; that this blessed hope of everlasting life, is excited and confirmed in their hearts by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ; and this hope does not dwell upon possessions transitory and perishing, but reaches forward to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and fading not away, reserved in heaven for all the faithful people of God. In the prosecution of this discourse, therefore, I shall consider the words of the text exactly in the order in which they lie before us, and from every part we may derive much useful instruction.

1st. Let the hearts of Christians overflow with gratitude and praise ; let them say with the apostle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And surely they will be irresistibly prompted to such expressions as these, if the greatest blessing deserve the warm acknowledgments of a thankful heart. By nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, they have been redeemed from this deplorable condition. Not able to determine, from the light of reason, whether sin can possibly escape the condemnation of God, who is infinitely holy, they have been assured, that through Jesus Christ, God can avert from His guilty creatures the punishment which they have justly incurred. Involved in clouds and thick darkness, when attempting merely by the strength of their own understanding, to obtain a clear prospect of the great objects of futurity ; the light of revelation has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon them. They can now rejoice and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. From the expectation of the promised inheritance, they can now have all joy and peace in believing. Let Christians, therefore, adopt the grateful language of the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise His holy name !"

2nd. In the words of the text, we are led to observe,

that the redemption of the world as revealed in the gospel, proceeds altogether from the abundant mercy of God. When man had perversely violated the divine law, and corrupted that nature which came pure out of the hands of his creator, what reasonable expectation could he have of God's favour? What just claim upon the inestimable inheritance of life and immortality? What prospect, indeed, could there be before him, but only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation? When truth stood engaged to carry into effect the determinations of the righteous Creator, when the arm of justice was lifted up to inflict upon the human race the penalty of the violated law; then did mercy interpose to avert the impending blow. She came arrayed in all the smiles of heavenly benignity, she compassionated the lost condition of helpless man, she effectually pleaded his cause, and recovered for him the forfeited favour of God. The gracious assurances of mercy were all completely executed, when our Redeemer said on the cross, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Thus, in the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ, mercy and truth met together upon terms of perpetual amity, righteousness and peace kissed each other, in token of perfect reconciliation.

3rd. We are taught by the apostle, that Christians are begotten again into a lively hope of future and perfect felicity. And what a happy transition is this from a state of doubt and anxiety; from the dreary prospect of entire annihilation, or the apprehensions of never ending woe. "The wages of sin is death," and we have all sinned and "come short of the glory of God." Like fleeting shadows, the imperfect and depraved children of men glide over the surface of the earth, and disappear for ever. But what is to be our portion in a future state? Will sincere repentance avail us? Will the long catalogues of our transgressions be effaced from the records of everlasting wisdom? Will God permit us to exist and be happy for ever? When meditating on these subjects, the

sagest philosophers of antiquity confessed their doubts and uncertainty.

From the perplexities of human reason ; from the sad effects of actual sin ; from the dread of falling into naught, or of existing for ever, obnoxious to the chastisements of inflexible justice ; we are restored to the lively hope of the forgiveness of God in this world, and of enjoying in His presence hereafter, a perfection of bliss, of which it hath not yet entered into our hearts to conceive.

4th. It is to be observed, that this comfortable and lively hope is established in the hearts of Christians, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And that this great event is a rational ground of steadfast hope, evidently appears from the following considerations : the resurrection of the Lord declares in terms of the most convincing, that the soul can subsist in a state of separation from the body ; that sin and death may be vanquished ; that the atonement which he offered for the sins of the world, was satisfactory to the divine justice, that he is indeed, the Son of God with power ; as able as he is willing to accomplish his great and merciful promises. By His incarnation, he entered into the field, engaged in the bloody conflict, and became subject unto death. But in His resurrection, He returned a triumphant conqueror, having subdued all our foes ; the fury of the world, the malice of hell, the tyranny of sin, the empire of the grave. And is not this sufficient reason to attend His glorious victories with joyful gratulations and lively hope ? What can shake our confidence in this invincible Captain of our salvation ? For, can any thing be too hard for him to perform, who, on the third day after His ignominious crucifixion, could raise himself from the dead ? If the resurrection of Jesus Christ be a fact, established upon incontrovertible evidence, then the Christians' hope and faith have not been in vain.

For we are to observe, in the last place, that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are animated with the lively hope of an incorruptible inheritance, reserved for us in heaven. He is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. In consequence of His great humiliation, He is now highly exalted, and is clothed with dignity and honour. When He ascended up on high, He received gifts for men.

Many of these He daily distributes among us, during our pilgrimage through this world. But when death shall have lost his sting, and the grave its victory, the last and best gift of God, through Jesus Christ, will be eternal life. The hope of the unbeliever is confined to earthly objects, and is circumscribed within the limits of this present world. But the Christian, in the glowing exultation of his heart, launches forth into futurity. His pious affections spring with rapture beyond the temporary scene of things ; and his faith lays hold on the great objects of eternity. The inheritance which he has in expectation, is not like those possessions, for which the children of this world are seen to toil and struggle, to supplant and oppress each other—possessions polluted with sin, uncertain in the enjoyment, and soon coming to an everlasting termination. Not so is the inheritance of the saints in light. It is subject to no corruption : it is neither obtained, nor to be enjoyed in any of the defilements of guilt ; it is reserved in heaven, the place of unsullied and uninterrupted peace and love, and it is secured by the unchangeable nature of God.

Let me then entreat your serious attention to the doctrines which have been now inculcated, and draw from them such reflections as may have a happy influence upon the disposition of your hearts, and upon your conduct through life. When the primitive Christians at any time met each other, it was a common mode of salutation “Christ is risen,” implying that all blessings were comprehended in that great truth.

Ye have like precious promises, ye are also children of the resurrection. Let a spirit of thankfulness and praise ever predominate in your bosoms. Be always disposed to bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead, and in the character of the King of Glory, opened the everlasting doors. "Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, and you shall be kept by the power of God unto salvation, which is ready to be revealed at the second appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Have your conversation of the world in simplicity and godly sincerity ; strive to obtain the favour of God by devout attention to all His commands ; diligently use the means of grace prescribed by Him, who has a right to dispense His favours upon His own terms ; endeavour to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God, as well as towards man, and in every period of this tempestuous life, have hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. In the time of trouble, this will supply you with patience. In the loss of relations or friends, it will abate your sorrow. In the assaults of spiritual adversaries, it will be an helmet of salvation. In the hour of death, it will enable you to anticipate with joy the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

J. A. APPLETON.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

John v. 28, 29.—*"The hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."*

THESE words form part of a discourse uttered by our blessed Redeemer in vindication of His claim to equality with God the Father; and they give us clearly to understand that a period will arrive when all the dead, without exception, will be raised again to life, preparatory to the final judgment.

It is, then, to the great doctrine of the resurrection, intimately connected with the very foundation of the gospel scheme, that I would now call your attention. I propose, first, to explain what is meant by this doctrine; and secondly, to consider the arguments by which it is sustained.

I. The doctrine is, not merely that when mankind shall be summoned to appear at the bar of God, on the judgment day, each will stand a human being complete, with body as well as soul; but also, that each will appear with the same body that he had on earth. That very body that was laid in the tomb, or swallowed in the mighty deep, or consumed in the flames of a conflagration, or devoured of wild beasts or of birds of prey, will then be raised again to life, and will become once more the abode of the same human spirit that had previously animated it on earth.

But, though the same body be raised, it will, in several important respects, be altered. We know that, when raised again, the body will be divested of all that is merely animal. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven!" And our Lord tells us that "the children of the resurrection neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but they are as the angels of God in heaven." All which clearly shews that the resuscitated body will be so remodelled, as to be adapted for a mode of existence in which the weaknesses and the wants of our mere earthly nature are unknown.

F. II. How do we know that such a prospect awaits us? How can we ascertain, with certainty, that a resurrection so glorious is before us?

1. It is obvious that on this point mere reason is at fault.

We cannot, from the nature of matter, nor from the organization of the human frame, derive any convincing argument for the revivification of the body after it shall have mingled with its own kindred dust.

Whatever changes may take place in the position or in the natural relations of the particles of matter, not one of them is lost. They may be scattered, and altered, and rearranged; but destroyed they are not. It is as difficult to conceive of the annihilation as of the creation of matter; and that all-perfect Mind which produced all things, and keeps them in being, doubtless knows, with unfailing accuracy, every change which takes place in the relations and position of every individual particle of matter. At His pleasure, doubtless, He can collect and organize, or re-organize, any number of those particles, in any place, at any moment, and under any circumstances whatever. Improbable, then, although we may admit a resurrection of the dead to be, judging from reason alone, yet impossible it cannot be deemed, so long as there is a God omniscient and almighty. But again.

2. Analogy does not fully warrant the expectation of a resurrection of the body after death.

There are, it is true, some singular and beautiful transformations almost perpetually taking place in the lower creation, especially in the insect world; and which have been looked upon by some persons, destitute neither of talent or of learning, as warranting the expectation of a resurrection of the dead, on the ground of analogy. It is, indeed, a very interesting spectacle that is presented to the observer, in the gradual progress of such transformation. The little insect that had passed its short life, confined almost entirely to one tree or one plant, on the leaves of which it fed, turns away from

from its choicest dainties, and seeks retirement, where it spins itself a silken shroud; or it buries itself in the earth; or it builds itself a tomb—sometimes of clay, sometimes of solid masonry; securely sheltered in which, it lies for days, or weeks, or months, without any indication of life.

But at the appointed season, that which was before an unsightly object, displays gorgeous wings, decked with the bright colours of the rainbow; it floats on the soft air, it basks in the warm sunshine, delighting only to sip nectar from the flowers; or it flits gently but swiftly in the evening twilight, and hums the requiem of departing day. Such, O Christian, shall be thy lot! To live thy brief span, then sleep thy allotted period in the tomb, only to arise at length to new life and unanticipated beauty, glory, and enjoyment!

3. Revelation alone must decide this question; and by revelation it is, happily, set at rest.

Even in patriarchal times, this wonderful change seems to have been reckoned upon with confidence. The translation of Enoch without seeing death, an event extensively known to the ancient world, might well have authorised the expectation of a future life, not to the etherial spirit only, but even to the mortal body, since Enoch was taken up into heaven without tasting death. Accordingly, the patriarch Job exclaims, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day on the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold Him, and not another.”

The illustration of St. Paul, in I. Cor. xv., is conclusive. Every seed has its own body—its own peculiar form: the tall stem, the green leaf, the swelling ear, which springs from the buried grain; but yet they are the same. The little seed that you cast beneath the soil in your garden, shoots up, a delicate creeper, with its green leaves, its clasping tendrils, and its gay flowers; or it emerges as the fragrant mignonette, the rich carnation, the gaudy poppy,

the varied pansy, or the odorous stock or wallflower ; each seed resulting in its appropriate plant, different, and yet the same : for the germ of the plant, with all its beauty and its fragrance, was in its seed. It is the identical germ, only expanded and matured. So also, says the Apostle, is the resurrection of the dead : "it is sown a natural body ;" just as what was sown an insignificant seed, is raised into a beautiful plant. The natural body is the seed, containing in embryo the germ of the future, the glorious, incorruptible, powerful, spiritual body which is to rise from it—the same body, yet in appearance, in properties, very different ; as different as the brilliant humming-bird, that once floated in the fluid of the egg from which it sprang. The identical bird now darting through the loftiest clouds of heaven, or plunging deep after its prey amidst the foaming billows of the ocean, once lay quiet and motionless—an embryo imprisoned within the shell ! And so also these bodies, now frail, decaying, and mortal, will hereafter rise from the dust of the tomb, identically the same, yet unspeakably altered,—to mount in the air—to soar away to heaven—to stand amid the blaze of God's presence before the throne—to range, unwearied, over all the plains of light—to climb its mountains, recline in its valleys, and make its groves resound with notes of bliss ; or to sink deep in the shades of darkness—to welter amid the flames of hell—and mourn in the caverns of despair for ever !

For, once more—

4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ puts this doctrine beyond the reach of doubt.

The resurrection of the Redeemer is a point of vital importance to the gospel scheme. It is the proof that His mission was divine, His mediation accepted. It is the proof and the pledge of our resurrection also : as the apostle says, "if the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen ; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." Hence the abundant evidence which was given to

the disciples on different occasions through a period of not less than forty days, to satisfy them beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the very body which they had seen crucified on Calvary, and entombed in the sepulchre of the Arimathean, was really alive ! Hence, too, the publicity of His ascension to heaven from Mount Olivet in open day. Hence, also appearance in person to Saul of Tarsus, when journeying to Damascus. So positive were the proofs, so decisive the evidence of this great event, that the malice of his boldest enemies did not venture a denial of it ; and, whenever the disciples adverted to the fact, they spoke with a boldness and a confidence, for which, under the circumstances, nothing can account, but the firmness of the conviction in their own minds ; and the certainty that those they addressed knew the truth of what they alleged, and would not dare to question its veracity.

But now, if Jesus of Nazareth died, lay a helpless corpse in the tomb, and afterwards rose to life—as the evangelists assert they knew He did, since “He shewed Himself to them alive, by many infallible signs after His resurrection,”—then it is certain that a resurrection of the dead is possible ; then, also, is the gospel true ; and then may we know also, assuredly, that as Christ is risen from the dead, He is become the first fruits of them that slept : and them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him.

To conclude. This direction is adapted to cheer us under all the difficulties of life.

How soothing to be assured that, however trials may now depress our spirits, cloud our brow, impair our health and strength, they are but temporary. The very body, frail though it is, and certain to succumb for a time, contains within it the indestructible germ of immortality. It may sink out of view for a time, in the great ocean of existence ; but it possesses an innate principle of indestructible vitality ; and it shall yet rise and float proudly and securely on that ocean, never more to sink or disappear. May God prepare us for that day of triumph !

E. NORTON.

SAINTS TO BE AS ANGELS.

—o—
 Mark xii. 25.—“ *But are as the Angels which are in Heaven.* ”
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THESE words were spoken by our Saviour in relation to the future condition of the just, who will be released from the burdens of mortality, and in the paradise of God, will commence the vitality of a new life. Every thing which has a bearing upon this life, cannot fail to be of importance. Although eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive of those glories which God hath prepared for them that love him; still much may be learned even here, of the life of immortality. Perhaps as much has been revealed in relation to the sublime truths of the world to come, as can be understood by the saints of God in their present imperfect state.

It may seem a singular fact, that nearly all we know of the condition of the saints in the church triumphant, is not so much a subject of direct revelation, as of direct inference. It is in this way that much is learned, which serves to inspire us with hope and consolation. Take for instance, a single doctrine upon which the believer dwells with delight: the cheering fact of the recognition, and re-union of Christian relations and friends in the world to come. Its direct assertion is, I believe, no where to be found. But does he not find much which leaves upon his mind no doubt of its truth. As the doctrine of the Trinity receives his assent, not because the word is found in the pages of inspiration, but because the fact is apparent, so in a like manner, though less in degree, does this article of his belief receive his most cordial assent. Passages occur in various parts of the Bible, which confirms this inference. The parable of the rich man and Lazarous—the vision of

Isaiah, who sees the king of Babylon recognized in the place of departed spirits—the recognition of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration—the declaration of St. John in the book of Revelations, that those renowned here for deeds of love and mercy, shall be known as such hereafter—the avowal of our Saviour, that His most faithful followers shall be professed as such before His Father and His holy angels in the day of judgment, and the nature of the judgment itself, all tend to a like conclusion.

Such will be the impression received by every one, who will take the time to examine the various and numerous passages of scripture which convey the important truth.

As before remarked, the doctrine is an inferential one, but not the less worthy of our belief. And may we not learn other truths in a like manner, of that destiny to which the righteous are tending? When our Saviour declares they are as the angels in heaven, do we not at once form an enlarged conception of their high position, and gather from His words an idea of the condition and employments of the perfected saints of God? They are as the angels in heaven. They are no longer subject to corruption or decay.

They have passed that bounding line, where “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.” There being therefore is spiritualized. As to individual existences, they will differ from the angels, because of the differences which there will be in the laws of their being. Man was created with a body, which will also be immortal; but this will not hinder its progression in knowledge, for it is no longer a natural or carnal, but a spiritual body. It will be the same body, but not the same elementary nature. This is apparent from the reasoning of Paul, where he compares the change which the human body undergoes at death, to that of a seed sown in the earth. “That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain, it may be of wheat, or

some other grain ; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." In the same manner as God hath decreed that this law shall govern the seed, so hath he decreed that a like law shall govern the resurrection of the body, equally mysterious and unexplainable by us. It is no longer mortal, but of a higher order, "for this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." All speculations as to the true nature of the glorified bodies of the saints, must therefore be vain. But this we do know, that it will be of that kind which never impedes the onward march of the ever growing mind in purity and bliss. As mind is ever active it will have employment—it will be as the angels in heaven ; but the angels as part of their sublime studies, dwell upon the wonders and triumphs of man's redemption ; or to use the language of the apostle Peter, "into which things the angels desire to look." The saints will therefore, have the same noble and enrapturing field of thought. There cannot be a more lofty one. No where else are displayed all the perfections of the Almighty. No where else is seen the fullness of infinite love. No where else are blended in full outline all the features of the Godhead. In the history of man's recovery, none of the beings of heaven of which we read, were silent spectators.

God himself proclaimed mercy to our first parents, and this was the great redeeming featnre of their captivity, they sorrowed, but not without hope. Then was heard the self-sacrificing devotion of the Son, proclaiming to the eternal Father, "Lo I come to do thy will." He came in the likeness of sinful men, but without sin. He became a servant. He came to show the majesty of law, and to avert from the race its frightful penalty. He stood alone in the fiery trial, save as an angel would hover near. He met alone on their own domains the powers of darkness, and in the stern conflict came off more than conqueror. He proclaimed immortality and life.

The powers of darkness were concerned. Stung with

remorse, and burning with hatred towards that God whose laws they despised, they have ever sought the ruin of man. They compass his frail erring footsteps, and spread around him the snares of death, and when burdened with growing evil he finally falls ; they shout the notes of demon triumph and exult in the growing empire of the fiends of hell.

But the words of the text also throw a light upon another question before referred to—the recognition of saints in heaven. St. Paul speaks of a companionship to exist between the righteous and angels. But can that exist without a knowledge of each other? And if they have a mutual knowledge at all, who will say that it will be less in degree than their knowledge of other things? Are we to suppose that affection towards God is ever to grow and expand with the rolling cycles of eternity ; that there is to be felt a love for the angelic host, and yet that man is to lose all affection for man? Impossible! If these things be so ; if the righteous are to be for ever as the angels in heaven ; if they are to shine forth in purity and light as the stars in the firmament ; if they are to be as “the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” how impelling the reason, how urgent the motive, that we should live the life of the righteous, that our last end may be like His! To secure any thing of value even in this life, we must make corresponding exertion. How many toil through anxious days and sleepless nights, to secure this world’s goods, which they must soon leave, which can afford no comfort when heart and flesh fail? How many spend “their strength for that which is nought, and their labour for that which satisfieth not,” which brings nothing of consolation, but rather imparts a continued sting as they are forced to exclaim, “miserable comforters are ye all!” They place their only hope in this life, destroying the recollection of another. And yet they know full well that another is at hand. But such is the nature of depravity—such the bondage in which they are enchained, that the pleading of the soul is disregarded, as it cries for higher

enjoyment, as it asks for its proper food! Well does the history of man confirm the truth of revelation which asserts his proneness to evil, and declares the nature of that deep-seated malady which leads to death!

But if these claims upon our attention fall unheeded, let affection speak. A pious father and mother, brothers and sisters have died in the faith of Jesus. They have entered upon the fruition of their hopes. There have been the sundering of ties as dear and tender as the heart-strings. They have left a void which nothing else can fill. To restore these loved ones to earth, no sacrifices would be deemed too great—no self-denial too painful—no burden too heavy—no cross too severe. To call up these buried dead, to clothe them anew with the well known forms of life and love, to hear again those familiar tones, which were never breathed but to cheer or bless, they would leave even the highway to wealth and fame, and deem themselves unspeakably rich in the exchange. Such a course they would willingly follow, and in others willingly approve. But will they not do as much to secure even more than this—not a re-union for a few fleeting painful years, but a re-union for ever? Seeing that their kindred dead cannot return, should they not rejoice that they can go to them, and thus obtain the full measure of that joy which they so ardently desire? And when assured that such is the case, how many are the reasons which crowd upon the mind, all inviting, all prompting to prepare for such happiness while the day of probation lasts, that theirs may be the comfort of holy David: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

It will at once be seen that religion addresses itself to the entire man: there is not a faculty but it gives it scope—there is not a healthful desire but it affords full satiety. It addresses the reason, it convinces the intellect, and it speaks to the heart and the genial affections which cluster there. Now it declares, "come and let us reason together;" and

then again, with a father's own familiarity and love, it whispers to him a well known duty, "my son, give me thy heart." Appealing to these, it does not stop here, but draws largely upon the future. It reveals the unseen world, and shews there the radiant pathway of the children of light; it appeals to the affections, and bids them live in enduring life, if they will but submit to her claims. The propriety of so doing is enforced again and again, exhausting all the variety of description. It next turns to the holy rounds which angels walk. Are they happy, pure, incorruptible, and ever growing in wisdom? Such may man become. Are they removed from every evil, and engaged in the praises of God for all the goodness and kindness shown them? Such man may become; such *you* may attain, and be even as the angels of God!

W. CUSHING.

THE VALLEY OF DECISION.

Joel iii. 14.—"*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.*"

A SENSE of ultimate personal responsibility is inseparable from the mind of man. There is a consciousness within him, which announces the existence of a God who judgeth in the earth, and warns him that the great object of his life must be to prepare to meet Him in a final account. The holy scriptures unite in the same solemn testimony, enlarge and confirm it with most awakening and important descriptions, and call upon men to be ready for the day of God's coming to judge the earth.

In the passage which I have selected for my present

text, there is a striking exhibition of this final judgment of man, the great day of his account with God. The Lord calls upon the heathen to assemble themselves together before Him, and for His mighty ones to come down in attendance upon Him. "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." The harvest for man is the close of his probation for eternity.

Man's real time of probation is in the present life. Here is the valley of decision, and the only valley of decision for eternity. As the tree falleth; so must it lie. No man's everlasting condition will be rendered more sure in the day of judgment than it is in the hour of death. Whether he leaves the present world as a child of, or as an enemy to, God, as such he remains for ever. He that is then holy, is holy still, and he that is then unjust, is unjust still.

Let us enquire,—

I. What may be understood as the valley of decision for man. The question is answered generally, that the whole life of man upon the earth is given to him as his time of education for an eternal state of being; and every question which is connected with his eternity, is to be decided by him here upon the earth. While this day of privilege lasts, every thing must be done that is necessary to be done, that he may appear before God in peace. But while we speak of questions to be decided here, there is actually but a single question proposed from God to man. As a wandering, rebellious creature, he is invited and commanded to come back in the spirit and act of reconciliation unto God. He is called upon to submit himself to the will of his Creator, and to find all his comfort and enjoyment in His favour. In the full provisions of the gospel, the means of entire and eternal union with God are offered to his acceptance, and the only question for him to decide,

is whether he will accept them. Will he lay hold of the hope which is set before him, and with a new heart, and a right spirit, glorify the great Redeemer? This is the question proposed to man, in all the messages of the gospel, and urged upon his consideration, by all the acts of divine providence in his behalf, and all the operations of the spirit of God upon his mind and heart. This practical question he cannot leave undecided. It meets him face to face, day by day ; and it must be met by him, and settled by him for himself, and that for eternity.

Some have decided this great question, but in a dreadful way. They have chosen death rather than life. They have finally refused the invitations of the Lord. They have turned their hearts away from Him ; rejected all His mercies, and driven from them the renewing influences of His holy spirit. From them, too, the Saviour has departed and withdrawn the quickening power of His grace. They are left alone. The providences of God do not affect them. The ministers and messages of God do not move them. They are barren and unfruitful in every thing which God can look upon with favour and acceptance, Jesus has called, and they have refused ; He has stretched out His hands and they have not regarded. They have distinctly declared that they will not come unto him for life. Alas ! some have decided this great question in entire infidelity. They have denied even the authority by which they are called back to exercise repentance towards God. Others have sunk down into confirmed worldiness of character, and have thrown away all sensibility to unseen and eternal things. Some have immersed themselves in ruinous vices ; and have broken and cast away all the cords of grace and purity. Some in mere thoughtless giddiness, mock at all the solemn messages of the Most High. Now all these have in reality, passed out of the valley of decision. There is no question before them to be settled. Their eternity has been fixed, and fixed by their own choice and determination.

Death will make no change with them for the better. The day of the Lord will only declare that which they have previously determined for themselves. Their harvest then will be from their own seed. They have sown to the flesh and from the flesh they shall reap corruption.

We cannot therefore, justly say, that all men now alive are in the valley of decision. We must narrow down our view of it, to that condition in the history of man, in which the great question for heaven or hell remains yet to be decided ; in which men have not finally come upon the Lord's side, nor yet finally rejected Him. The mind is then called to the consideration of the great demand : shall I prefer the reproach and promises of Christ, or the treasures of the world, and the pleasures of sin ? Each time a message of the gospel is heard, this question is distinctly proposed again, and again answered by man. We may not say of individual cases, that men are not still within reach of a Saviour's mercy. It is always true that whosoever cometh to him shall in no wise be cast out. But we know that they are within the limits of his offers, by whom this great subject is still considered, who are reflecting upon the wants and the prospects of their souls—halting upon the eve of a journey which they are required to undertake, and still undetermined between the diverting motives which are presented to them, in what direction they shall finally go. For them, conscience is awakened, fear is excited, and consideration is exercised ; but no action has yet taken place. They are still waiting upon the brink of the pool, but still only upon its edge. The question before them in the circumstances which attend it is momentous. All others are nothing in comparison with it. Everything really important, for time and for eternity, is involved in the decision of it. This time and state of character are peculiar. And these may be considered by us as the real valley of decision for man.

Probably the great majority of those who listen to the

gospel are still in this valley of decision. A blessing and a curse are yet before them. Opposing offers and invitations are still presented to them. None are without some convictions of their wants. There are few who do not make resolutions of personal amendment; few who do not often desire a better portion than this world can give them. My friends, the great concerns of a world to come are spread before you; and it is for you to determine, whether you shall be saved or lost for ever. Now is your accepted time, your appointed opportunity, for this determination. You will be unwilling, probably, to enter into a covenant with your real adversary, that you will never lay yourselves down as a sacrifice to Him who has loved you, and died for you. And yet you are no less unwilling to take upon you the yoke of Christ, and follow Him. You are thus still halting between two opinions. The Saviour waits to be gracious unto you; and Satan waits to destroy. But this condition cannot be permanent; this state of mind cannot abide. You must come to a final choice in this great controversy. And however you may try to put the decision from you, and earnestly shrink from it, it cannot be long postponed.

The Holy Spirit is thus rapidly leading you on to a point where this issue must come. He will not always strive with you. He will then either have sealed you unto the day of redemption, or have withdrawn His power from you for ever. What condition can be more solemn than that in which you stand, and are still undecided amidst all your privileges, what you shall select as your portion and your inheritance! Yet such is, probably, the condition of the most who listen to me. Oh! that you may know, at least, in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace, for soon they will be hidden from your eyes for ever!

III. The text admonishes you, that this decision must be speedily made, "the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." "The day of the Lord" is the hour of final

determination of the destiny of the children of men. It is the day when His purposes are completed ; when the actual trial for man is closed ; and when the character and condition of each will be settled for ever. According to the character of man, it is an hour of joy, or of deep and dreadful mourning. It is the day on which He makes a final separation between him that serveth God, and him that serveth Him not ; the day in which He makes up His jewels, gathers His wheat into His garner, separates the precious from the vile, binds the tares in bundles for the fire, and delivers over the ungodly unto eternal perdition.

This day must certainly come at the period of death. The hours of consideration will thus be finished, and the actual enjoyment of the glories of heaven, or the actual endurance of the pains of hell, will close all opportunities to make that great selection for which life was prolonged amidst the privileges of the gospel. But when men are awakened to consider their spiritual interests, to see and feel the necessity of some salvation, the day of their decision is, probably, much nearer than the day of their death. An anxious and enquiring mind cannot long remain undecided in regard to the course to be pursued. While the wax is melted into softness, the impressions must be made. And in the case of the awakened sinner, whatever the choice may be, it is generally a final one. He now sees facts as they are ; and while he thus sees them, it is impossible to postpone his decision concerning them. It is his privilege and his duty immediately to embrace a Saviour, and to rejoice in Him. The Lord Jesus is willing and waiting to receive him ; and he is invited to come unto Him—ignorant and perishing as he is—to obtain the mercy and the help he needs. His first, instant duty is, to accept the promises of the gospel. And whenever he shall yield his will to Christ, and submit himself wholly to the Saviour's grace and power, he is safe.

My friends, you cannot remain long in a state like this. The day of the Lord is near. It cannot be postponed. This

is, in a peculiar sense, your accepted time, and this is your day of salvation. The night is before you, when nothing can be done, and nothing can be gained for your souls. Some of you will resist the Holy Ghost, until He will depart from you. You will be left in a hardened, careless state of mind. Your consciences will relapse into unconcern; you will sink into forgetfulness and aversion from God; and go down from depth to depth, to final loss and ruin. It will have been better for you, if you had never been awakened, if you had never thought of your souls, if you had continued from the beginning, and perished in an originally careless, hardened state. But you have chosen, in the face of every motive, and duty, and privilege, the inheritance of sorrow which is laid up for unbelieving men. Oh! how painful is the thought, that this will soon, perhaps, be the case of some who now hear me! They will go on rejecting the goodness of God against themselves, until no place will be found for repentance, and no room left for hope! It is rare indeed, after a man has been once solemnly aroused to think of the things which belong to his peace, if he reject the offers of the gospel, that he feels any willingness to have his attention again called to them. He passes out of the valley of decision, and the Lord departs from him. God waits among you to be gracious, but He will not be mocked. How important, then, becomes your present condition! While you are candidates for eternity, encompassed with privileges, how serious and influential may be the next step you will take in the great concerns of your souls! Who shall estimate its consequences for you? Who shall retrieve its possible errors?

For others, the day of the Lord is near, as the commencement of everlasting liberty and hope. They will be led to build themselves on the Lord Jesus Christ. They will lay themselves down on His merits, as their chosen foundation. They will be safe in Him for ever. They will pass from a conviction that they are lost and need a restoration, to a godly

sorrow for sin, to a full submission to God, to an entire renovation of heart; and in this change of heart and character, they will have that repentance unto salvation which is not to be repented of. They will be welcome to the favour of God, and made the objects of His peculiar and unchanging love. How happy will be their condition! How precious their privilege! How joyful, for them, is the fact, that the day of the Lord is near! My friends, many of you are this day in this narrow valley of decision. It will soon be passed by you. But whither will you pass from it? Will you return to impenitent sin and inevitable ruin? Or will you ascend from it with Christ, to glory and to God? This is the question which I press on your determination. In the presence of a heart-searching God, it must be decided by yourselves. What multiplied and powerful motives combine to urge you to make your calling and election sure! To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, as in past days of provocation; but hear the voice, embrace the promises, and obey the commands of God your Saviour.

S. H. TUNG, D.D.

THE PERPETUITY OF THE LAW.

LUKE xvi. 17.—“*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.*”

THE laws of the Jews are commonly divided into three: the *moral*, the *ceremonial*, and the *judicial*. The moral are such as grow out of the nature of things, and which cannot be changed. They are of universal application, and binding on man in every condition, clime, and period. Of

this kind are the ten commandments, which are neither abolished nor superseded. Ceremonial laws are such as are appointed to meet certain states of society, and to regulate the religious rites and ceremonies of a people. These can be changed when the circumstances which rendered them expedient no longer exist. Judicial laws are those which were employed in the arrangements of courts of justice in the Old Testament, and might be altered or abolished as the course of events might require. Partaking of the nature of the ceremonial law, when the form of the Jewish polity was changed, the judicial law was in the order of things, no longer obligatory. Laws to regulate mere matters of ceremony and rites of worship might be changed. Many of these our Lord set aside; but those which enjoin love and obedience to God, justice and kindness to men, are in their nature unalterable, and cannot pass away. The coming of Christ fulfilled the ceremonial law, and all its peculiarities were abolished: the shadow was lost in the substance, and ceased to be binding; but the moral law was confirmed and declared to be immutable.

It is of this law that our Lord speaks in the words before us. The decalogue embodies it. Hence the strong language in which its perpetuity is asserted. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of the law cannot fail."

This declaration announces a solemn fact: and what is here affirmed of the law distinctively is of universal application. The great truth here laid down may be thus expressed. The laws which govern the universe are of infinitely more consequence than the universe itself: and that all the creatures of God, rational and irrational, should obey the laws to which He has been pleased to subject them, is unspeakably of greater importance, than that any or all of them should be kept in being. The creatures, animate and inanimate, which make up the universe, have been placed by the Creator under laws suited to their several natures, and to the respective ends which their creation is

intended to subserve. Wherever a creature exists, there is a law that reaches and governs it.

Glorious are all the works of God. Every one viewed in itself, bespeaks the creative energy of Him who made it: but it is only when regarded in its relations to other things, that its real excellency shines forth. For instance, how beautiful to *us* is the spectacle of a field of waving corn? Its verdure is refreshing to the eye, because adapted to our organ of vision. And when it has reached maturity and is fit for the sickle, its yellow ripeness is charming, because it gives promise of a supply of the food we need. But, if we may imagine such a thing, transfer that field of golden grain to a world of creatures with a constitution totally unlike ours, and its beauty would vanish because its fitness to an end would be lost. The glory of creation mainly arises from the benign purpose and perfect adaptation of its countless parts. And hence the proof of the sentiment in the text, that the universe must be under law to God, and that the maintenance of the laws which govern it, is vastly more important than the existence of the universe itself.

Let us, however, illustrate this position by a reference to *the worlds above us*. There are the heavenly bodies, which, under the dominion of law, revolve through their immense and complex circuits in perfect harmony and order. Moving with a majestic and never ceasing steadiness, the astronomer is enabled to measure their size, their speed, and their orbits; to calculate the reciprocal influence of planet upon planet; while the mariner, with a perfect confidence that these starry guides never mislead him, boldly pushes out his bark upon the trackless deep. In all this there is moral law. Though the objects themselves consist simply of unvitalized matter, yet the laws which govern them are intimately connected with the comfort and convenience of man. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy work."

Take another illustration. Let it be from *the earth on*

which we dwell. Here we see a grand and complicated system of laws perpetually at work. There are the refreshing alternations of day and night; the salutary succession of the seasons; the rising and falling tides; seeds planted at the right time, and in a proper soil giving back their kind with a remunerative liberality; fire burns, food nourishes, poisons kill. While the earth endures, there will be seed time and harvest, summer and winter, day and night. The farmer plants his seed, and then waits for the appointed weeks of harvest. The mariner is able to tell the exact moment when the tides will be high or low at any given point. But suppose the whole of this wonderful arrangement were mysteriously disturbed; that the processes of nature were suddenly left to chance, subject to no laws, so that men sowed fields and reaped nothing; so that the food of one day ministered nourishment and the next poison; the water of to-day quenched thirst, and to-morrow increased it—I ask, could the God of love, the Almighty law-giver, permit this earth to fall into a position so lawless, and so destructive to the creatures that dwell upon its surface, and live upon its fruits? No indeed. Better a thousand fold that it were blotted from existence than that it should become the plaything of chance, without law, without life: a world as dishonouring to its Maker, as it would be intolerable for man. “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.”

But let us come nearer home, and take an illustration from *man himself*. In whatever aspect we view him, we find him the subject of laws; of laws unchangeable as the eternal lawgiver Himself. Our *bodies* are under law to God. We may not trifle with any one of these laws to which He who “formed us of clay, and made us men,” hath subjected our physical nature, without paying the penalty. Let a man, for instance, turn night into day—whether he be a student whose thirst for knowledge keeps him at his books when he should be in his bed; or a miserable sensualist who gives

his midnight hours to revelry and intemperance—and the inevitable result will be, in either case, a ruined constitution. Whoever persists in eating or drinking that which disorders his system, or shatters his nerves, must take the consequences which the law of his being appoints to all who thus act. The blessed God will not modify the order He has established, so as to suit the convenience of depraved appetites.

Thus far we have viewed the text chiefly as it bears upon this earthly life. But it contains lessons of still higher moment. We know that this world is a prelude of another, and in the relation of youth to age, we have a striking image of the relation which subsists between our present life and the life to come. Ordinarily what the youth is, will be the man; and hence the exhortation and promise, “train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” There are, no doubt, occasional exceptions to this rule, for He whose grace alone can renovate the soul, is a Sovereign, working all things according to the counsel of His own will. Still, universal experience proves that “the child is the father of the man;” that the impressions we receive during our early years are most enduring, and give shape and complexion to our future character. He, therefore, who wastes the period which God has allotted to make a man of him, such as he might and ought to be, madly throws away a jewel of priceless value, and now its full recovery is impossible. He may weep bitter tears, labour hard, rise early and eat the bread of carefulness in order to make up for lost time, but his success at best will be only partial: he has wasted what he can never entirely replace.

Such is the law of our present earthly existence, and it shadows forth the law of our future and eternal life. The law under which man is made, has been broken by every child of Adam times without number, and its awful voice may be heard proclaiming, “cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book

of the law to do them." But, blessed be God, there is another and still louder voice—its tones sweeter than the sweetest melody of angels—publishing to all nations, and offering to every creature eternal life as the free gift of God. It is the voice of Him, who, though "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," came down to earth, was made under the law, that He might magnify it by His own perfect obedience, and by the shedding of His own precious blood.

Calvary has its law no less than Sinai. The gospel of Jesus Christ no less than the mosaic dispensation. Its first and great command is, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The atoning work of Jesus in the place of the sinner, forms the grand theme of revelation. The gospel which brings life and immortality to light, proclaims by a law as immutable as the eternal throne, that perish man must for ever, unless saved through the righteousness and atonement of the Son of God.

And with no less explicitness it declares, "except we repent, are born again, are converted, are adorned with holiness," we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This is law; the law of life in Christ Jesus which makes us free from the law of sin and death. Eternal life is suspended upon a full compliance with its demands.

"But can a feeble, helpless worm
Fulfil a task so hard?"

No, nor is he required to do so in his own strength. Write down all your wants, carry them all to the divine footstool, and there you will read, "my grace is sufficient for thee; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." Let not your hearts beguile you into the belief, that you shall somehow escape; that though you live in sin, something may turn up to save you from hell. Be not deceived; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap.

J. FORSYTH, D.D.

ON ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

Mark ix. 47, 48.—*“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”*

THE solemn and awful doctrine of future punishments seldom fills such a place in the pulpit as it does in the Bible, and in the discourses of our great teacher, Jesus Christ. The subject is painful. We love to think upon heaven, but feel a natural aversion to think upon hell. Yet we must not omit to call your attention to it, as it forms no immaterial element in the whole volume of revelation.

It may be, that some persons think that the discussion of so gloomy and harrowing a theme can do no good. Perhaps it may not : I cannot say that it will. So far as I can learn, nothing that I have said of late has done any good. If you will tell me what subject will do you good, warm your hearts with love to God and to the cause of Christ, I will preach upon it without delay and without hesitation. Whether the doctrine has a *tendency* to do good, is a question with which I have nothing to do. It is the imperative duty of every minister of Christ to proclaim such truths as he finds in the scriptures, and leave the result to God. True, we do not believe in the notion of *frightening* men into religion ; but thousands, in the first instance, have been moved by fear to fly from the wrath to come. If you believe that “there is a dreadful hell” for the wicked, the doctrine will do you good ; but no truth can be of service which is not believed. No man has any right to pretend to be more wise, or more compassionate, than our Saviour ; and He thought it consistent both with wisdom and with compassion, to utter, for

the *third time*, the words of the text. And He evidently uttered them with a view to alarm His hearers. He addressed Himself to their fears, that He might produce obedience to His commands. He would have the hand and the foot cut off and cast away, and the eye plucked out and trodden under foot, if the one or other of these three members of the human body should prove a stumbling-block to the salvation of the soul. We are not to take the language literally. A man may do the whole of the mutilation here prescribed, and go to hell notwithstanding. There is no merit—there can be none—in disfiguring the body. The act must be offensive to God who formed it. The meaning is plain. It is better to go to heaven without enjoying the things that cause us to sin, than enjoy them here, and be finally lost.

In the terms employed by the Saviour to represent the sufferings of the lost, He alludes to the manner in which the Jews disposed of the bodies of the dead. Sometimes, as is the custom with us, they placed them in graves or tombs, where they were devoured by worms that were produced by the natural decay of the material frame. At others, they prepared a funeral pile, on which the body was placed; and when reduced to cinders by the flame, the ashes were collected and deposited in an urn. This reference to the funeral ceremonies of the Jews is indeed figurative, but it is not the less terrible on that account. Let us, then, with solemn and chastened feelings, lift the veil, and contemplate the awful truths which are thus concealed.

The sufferings of the lost are represented by three images—the gnawing worm, the unquenchable fire, and the perpetuity of their existence.

I. The gnawing worm. This is a significant emblem, taken from what occurs in the case of the corruption of the tomb, and transferred to the conscious state of the soul in the place of torment. With respect to corporeal sufferings, they will doubtless compose a part of future punishment,

since we are told by our Saviour Himself, that the bodies of those who have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation ; and this doctrine is further confirmed by the parable of the rich man who in hell lifted up his eyes, thus intimating that anguish of body was an ingredient in his wretchedness. There is nothing unreasonable in this. The body is at once the tempter of the soul to many sins, and its instrument in committing them ; there is therefore a manifest propriety in making them companions in punishment.

It is, however, to the bitter pains of the soul that the declarations of scripture principally refer. And the imagery of the text—"where the worm dieth not"—conveys the idea, that the soul will suffer miseries analogous to those which would be inflicted on a living body, by a multitude of reptiles constantly preying upon it. But what is this gnawing worm ?

I answer : the passions and desires of the soul. This is a point easily understood. Experience teaches us that, even in this life, the passions are capable of inflicting acute pain and distress. Look, for instance, at a man who is habitually peevish, fretful, and discontented. Has he not worms already gnawing at his heart ? Look at the envious man, who feels a secret pang when he hears a rival commended, or sees him successful. Is there no gnawing worm in his bosom ? Look at the covetous man, who wears himself out in the pursuit of wealth, harassed by craving desires, cares, and anxieties. Can any worm gnaw worse than these ? Look at the proud, the ambitious, the revengeful, whose blood boils at every real or fancied neglect, and who have always some quarrel upon their hands. Is there no corroding tooth at work in their breast ? And look at the libertine and the drunkard. How restless and how wretched they are ! And yet all this wretchedness is as nothing, compared with that which the sinner will feel when engulfed in despair. There, not even the respite which sleep now affords will be found.

There, his passions, which are now in their infancy, will start up into giant strength, while every object of his earthly desire will be for ever removed from his reach.

Terrible, however, as the gnawing of passion will be, the stings of conscience will be still more so. Even in this world, conscience has driven many to despair, madness, and suicide, as in the case of Judas. But there its voice will be more dreadful. Here it speaks only at intervals: there it will speak without intermission. Here the sinner may for awhile silence it with false but specious arguments and excuses—with promises of future amendment—with the intoxicating draught, or scenes of worldly amusement: but there he will have no means of silencing or escaping from its reproaches for a moment. There the condemned will clearly see what a God they have offended, what a Saviour they have neglected, what a heaven they have lost, and into what an abyss of misery they have plunged themselves. All the sins they have committed, the Sabbaths they have violated, the sermons they have heard, the warnings and invitations they have slighted, the serious impressions which they have banished, will be so many worms gnawing at their hearts without ceasing. But—

II. Our Saviour speaks also of an unquenchable fire. The reference seems to be to material fire, such as was sometimes used to consume the dead; or it may refer to the valley of Hinnom, where the combustible refuse of the city was burnt, and where the fire was never allowed to expire. The sentiment expressed is only another form of shewing the keen and constant sense of misery which the lost will suffer, under the righteous displeasure of Him who is styled “a consuming fire.” He says of Himself, “a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn even to the lowest hell.” And “who knoweth the power of His anger? even according to His fear, so is His wrath.” What must it be to see the Author of our being, the Sovereign of the universe, the great, the glorious, the omnipotent, the infinite

Jehovah, regarding us with severe displeasure, and His anger burning against us like fire! O, this will indeed be a scorching flame to the soul! a fire, which will be felt in all its faculties, filling them with anguish to overflowing; anguish as much surpassing any that could be occasioned by material fire, as the power and wrath of the Creator are greater and more terrible than those of His creatures. Well, therefore, might the prophet ask, "who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?" Verily it will be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!

III. There is yet one other feature of future sufferings to be considered. The misery and anguish of the finally lost will be endless. Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Thrice the Saviour makes this declaration. There are no expressions in the New Testament which more fully and distinctly signify endless duration, than those which are here employed. The same words which are used to express the eternity of God, are applied to the punishment of the wicked who die in their sins. He liveth for ever and ever; and we are assured that the wicked shall be tormented for ever and ever. The gnawing worm, the biting passions, and stinging conscience of the sinner will never die out; they are a part of the soul itself; and as the soul is immortal, they must be immortal. Moreover as God cannot change, the fire or power of His anger cannot change. It is this which constitutes the most terrible ingredient of that cup, which impenitent sinners must drink. Dreadful as will be their sufferings, they would be comparatively light were there any hope of their termination. But of this there is none. And the conviction of this will wither their courage, and cause them to lie down in despair.

My brethren, if you should think that this is an exaggerated picture of future woe, listen, I ask you, to the plain and unadulterated language of God Himself. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, shall go away into

everlasting punishment, shall be punished with everlasting destruction, the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." These are some of the plain passages of scripture on this subject; and he who revolts at them, might and ought, to be consistent, reject the Bible altogether. I will only add, that all true penitents feel and acknowledge, that it would be perfectly just on the part of the righteous and holy Governor of the universe to inflict this punishment upon them. Besides, the corroding passions, the remorse of conscience, and the displeasure of God, which will constitute the misery of sinners, are all the results of sin, every wilful sinner has the seeds of eternal woe in his own bosom. The sparks which are to kindle the flames of the bottomless pit, are already glowing within him. Christ now offers to extinguish these sparks. The tears He shed, and the blood He poured out, were designed to quench them. But if any among you will not accept His offer, you cannot justly complain if the fire should break out into an unquenchable conflagration, and burn for ever. As well might a man, who should put vipers into his bosom, complain of God, because they stung him. As well might a man, who has kindled a fire and thrown himself into it, complain because the flames scorched him. But why will you die, when the Son of God died to save you? I can only point to the cross of Christ and say, there is blood there, which, if properly applied, will at once and for ever quench the fire, and effectually deliver you from the wrath to come.

E. PAYSON, D.D.

DILIGENCE AND PROSPERITY.

Proverbs x. 4.—“*The hand of the diligent maketh rich.*”

WE cannot be too careful in observing the connexion which exists between the bounty of God and the duty of man. All things are of God, and our dependence upon Him is absolute and imperative. He gives us our daily bread ; but we must not overlook the fact, that the Creator deals with men as rational and active creatures, and that as such, they are bound to make use of their reason and powers of activity.

There is in this respect, a perfect accordance between the established law of nature and the law of grace. The *former* of these combines a dependence upon God for daily subsistence with the necessity of effort to procure it. The *latter* tells us, and insists upon it, that while by grace we are saved through faith which is the gift of God, we are nevertheless to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” On the one hand, we are called upon, if we would have our daily bread, to look for it in the observance of the common laws of providence for the preservation of life ; and on the other to seek first the kingdom of God, that all other things may be added unto us.

The text says, that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich.” Let us apply this sentiment, *firstly*, to the ordinary affairs of life, and *secondly*, to the great and higher purposes of salvation.

I. With respect to temporal blessings. The purposes of God, be they what they may, are never carried into effect without the use of those means by which they are intended to be accomplished. The application of these means is indispensable to the attainment of the end. If we neglect these, it will be worse than folly to hope for any blessing

“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.” “He that will not work, neither let him eat.”

An important question arises here, what are the appointed means by which a beneficent providence supplies the temporal wants of man? These are mainly the following.

The first is *diligence* or *industry*. Our dependence upon God does not destroy our obligations to diligence in our calling; we are required by the law of nature so to employ our time, our talents, and opportunities of usefulness to good account. An unoccupied and idle man countervails all the laws both of his animal and intellectual frame, and wages war upon every organ of his material structure. Useful labour is man's appropriate employment; if he neglect it, he will never answer the great end of his existence. Religion offers no bounty to the voluntary idle; her bounty is for those who would work but cannot. Though the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, yet it is a law which no man may trifle with, that success is attained by the steady pursuit of lawful and laborious exertions. It is a dream of the imagination to look for a competent portion of the good things of this life without effort.

The law of industry is a benevolent law. The unblighted and balmy paradise of Adam was not sufficiently fair to make him happy without occupation. Man cannot be deprived of a greater earthly blessing than healthful and appropriate employment. If you would make him miserable let him have nothing to do. Idleness is the nursery of crime. It is that bitter and prolific germ of which all rank and poisonous vices are the fatal fruits. It is the field where the enemy sows tares while men sleep. It has slain its thousands. It is the corrupter of men and nations. It corrupted Sodom. It corrupted Nineveh. It corrupted Babylon. It corrupted Greece and Rome, and it will eat as canker the vitals of every community where it is allowed to prevail. These are not unbiblical observations. They are

taught throughout the scriptures. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," is the unrepealed law of the Creator. Men do not live by miracles. They have no warrant to throw themselves upon divine providence, in the neglect of those appliances which God has established. "Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," is the immutable rule.

The second means, without which we may look to God in vain for temporal good, is *economy*. He who wastes what Providence gives him, may not complain of it being withheld or withdrawn.

Nature and observation are constantly reading us this lesson. In all that God does there is nothing lost, nothing thrown away, nothing, but is designed for some useful purpose. Accurate philosophical investigations have discovered, that every substance in the natural world that does not retain its original form, passes into some other quality equally important in its place. The vessel of water which is converted into vapour and steam, is again condensed in the laboratory of nature, and loses not a scruple of its original weight. The billet of wood, consumed in the fire, or the trunk that decays in the forest, gives out the whole of its substance, either in the matter it deposits, or the gases it emits. There is no example of the entire destruction of anything in the universe. Changes indeed take place in countless variety ; but the most penetrating observer has not been able to discover that one particle of matter has been absolutely destroyed.

And such is the voice of the bible. Standing in the midst of abundance, miraculously created by His command, the Saviour gave utterance to the injunction, "Gather up the fragments that nothing be lost." He did not deem it mean to be frugal. Meanness is more justly chargeable to waste and prodigality. He that is regardless of little things will be very apt to be careless of those that are greater. Men must not only plant and water, but watch and discreetly

use, if they expect God to give the increase. "A good man will guide his affairs with discretion."

Once more. I do not hesitate to specify among the means of temporal prosperity *a sacred regard to the Lord's day*. The command "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," is so adapted to the wants and constitution of man, that he who trifles with it, usually pays the penalty in temporal suffering. To rest from secular and worldly employment one seventh part of every week, and to devote its hours to the cultivation of public and personal piety, has been found to exert a benign effect on the temporal interests of man. Health of body, cheerfulness and activity of mind, cannot be long enjoyed without this repose. If a man would make the most of human life, to say nothing of the world to come, he must be a conscientious observer of this consecrated day. There is something rotten in the character of a man who despises the fourth commandment, and wilfully pollutes the ordinance of heaven.

II. These points may be considered as among the prominent means of attaining to earthly good. Industry, carefulness, and a sincere regard to the Sabbath day. There are others collateral if not essential to it. A sacred regard to truth—honesty in every transaction—rectitude and integrity of character, may be considered as connected with our success. On these particulars however, I will not at present dwell, but proceed to shew in the second place, that the sentiment in the text is equally true with respect to the interests of the soul.

Here we may speak with even more confidence and certainty than with respect to the worldly view of the subject we have now taken. Many events at once adverse and unexpected, which no mental perception could have shadowed forth, or intellectual sagacity prevent, may conspire to frustrate the most diligent in their enterprise, and disappoint their hopes. The hand of God may be upon them, sickness, infirmity, calamity, the treachery of pre-

tended friends may blight their efforts, and render their diligence fruitless. "The fig tree may not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the field, and there shall be no herd in the stalls." It may be so as an exception to the rule, but it is never so in the case of the soul. Here it is an immutable law, an integral element, that "the hand of the diligent maketh rich." There is an opulence in the divine benignity which satisfies the desires of every praying spirit. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

We must read the proverb in the text, by the light of this and similar passages in the New Testament. There is a *certainty* in the promise. What Solomon means by making rich, our Lord explains by being filled. Other desires and pursuits may plunge us into disappointment and despair : but labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life shall be rewarded in the issue to the extent of our largest expectations. The certainty of disappointment to those who are eagerly in search of more worldly pleasures is deeply afflictive to a human mind. Look at the young, the rich, the beautiful, the healthy. Animated by hope, and credulous of joy, they cherish the keen thirst for sub-lunary delights. A few years roll away. The flower has shed its leaves. The young, the beautiful, the gay, sleep in the darkness of the grave ! And if this world were all their heritage, they are bankrupts for eternity ! But mark the lot of him who is diligent in his pursuit of eternal life. Has God ever blighted his prospects ? Never. The first fruits of a rich and eternal harvest he has already received. He possesses even now, a peace of heart which survives the shocks of adversity ; a peace which his future struggles with calamity shall not impair, and which shall be his firm and cheering associate even through the cold solitudes of the valley of the shadow of death. Poor he may

be in this world's goods, but he is "rich in faith, and an heir of the kingdom which God has provided for all who love Him."

And at length, when such a man has reached the world to which the warm affections of his heart are linked, he will rest in peace. His joy will be full. "He will hunger no more, neither thirst anymore ; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne leads him unto living fountains of waters, and wipes away his tears." He has access to the fullness of joy. The days of his mourning are ended. He has gained the true riches, and is rich indeed.

J. EVERITT.

THE INFALLIBLE DIRECTOR OF MAN.

PROVERBS XVI. 9.—"*The heart of a man deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.*"

THE doctrine laid down in this passage, is matter of uniform experience. It is founded on man's ignorance and God's knowledge. Man deviseth his way; proposeth a certain course of action, but his plans and purposes are overruled, and he finds himself after years of toil and effort in a position the most opposite to his earlier hopes and wishes. Little indeed does any one know what lies before him. We form to ourselves a scheme of pleasure, or of gain; of greatness or of wealth; but we walk forward in the path

of life, as men grope their way in a strange road step by step, in total darkness. Memory can review and call to the mind much that is past ; but we have no mental faculty by which we can penetrate the future. A curtain is suspended before our eyes, which recedes before us as we advance, revealing things most unexpected, often most undesired, frequently most startling. All human wisdom has hitherto failed to devise a way to ascertain what a single day or hour may bring forth. Men have earnestly longed to know the future, and have tried to know it, but without success. The extent to which astrology, sooth-saying, and fortune-telling, and similar impositions have been patronized in every age, shews how eagerly men would know, if they could, what lies before them. But auguries, and oracles, and omens, and dreams in which many persons place great confidence, have invariably failed to draw aside the veil which hides futurity from mortal vision.

Now, this view of our situation may seem dark and gloomy. It is, however, not the less true on that account. To the man, the devises of whose heart are full of rebellion to God, it must be so. And I would that every forgetter of God in this assembly did feel it so. But know you, O man, O woman, whose pursuits, and plans, and pleasures all have reference to this life—how know you but that you are now on the brink of some awful precipice which crosses the very path in which you tread? How know you that your feet may not be pressing at this moment the margin of some frightful abyss, so that a single step more in the direction on which you have set your heart, may plunge you into destruction without remedy? You cannot know it. You are not sure that this very day may not bring forth your everlasting ruin.

It is at this point that the word of God meets us. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," is the testimony of Jeremiah. "I will bring the blind by a way

that they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known," is the promise of God by His prophet Isaiah. It is a promise made to believers, and to all who look to the Captain of their salvation to direct their steps. "The ways of a good man are ordered by the Lord;" they are not of his own choosing.

Let us now proceed to shew, how truly the text has been, and still is illustrated in the dealings of God, with respect to His providence and grace. We shall find the fact verified in the experience of all who will review with close and impartial fairness the history of their feelings and course of life. So contrary to our own plans and anticipations have we been led along, that we have evidence of a superhuman wisdom and power directing our steps.

I. The guidance of God may be traced in the dispensations of *His providence*. The recorded history of the Jewish nation, affords a beautiful illustration of the truth, that the Governor of the world is active in all human affairs. No natural causes can explain the wonderful events that occurred from the call of Abraham to the time of the Redeemer. In every scene, not only the miraculous but the ordinary, the hand of the Deity is visible. And had the blessed God inspired a prophet to write our history up to this time, I doubt not that we should be astonished to see how active the agency of heaven has been in all that has befallen us. We should, in perusing the record, be made to feel, that if there is less of miracle there is no less of Providence around us now, than was around the Jews in the days of their theocracy.

But blinded as our understandings are, and heedless of the hand of God while it works, we can often clearly see the traces of that hand when its work is done. However common-place his course of life, I may venture to assert, that there is not one adult in this audience, who can sit down in solitude and take a candid retrospect through the years that have gone over him from childhood to the

present, who will not feel the calm conviction stealing in upon his spirit, that there has been an unseen hand leading him in paths that he knew not; so true are the words of the poet—

“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

Were we to enter upon a faithful examination of our position, and compare the plans and pictures which our heart devised, with the realities of our path, what a contrast would strike our eye! We should find unforeseen circumstances arising all along the way, to alter our determinations, and change our course. It may be some incident has occurred—some unexpected reverse of fortune has overtaken us, or some bereavement has snatched away a relative or friend, whose death dashed many a fond hope, and withered our sweetest flowers.

Ah! how many sad passages of life, unpainted in your youthful picture, have you not encountered! Passions have been stirred up which you never anticipated. Trials and temptations have beset you, which you never suspected could have existence. Friends, whom you deemed true as truth itself, have deserted you, perchance have become your enemies. And so, by these and a thousand other unforeseen incidents, your steps have been directed in a path which it was no part of your original plan to tread. Yet you have been preserved till now! Often, perhaps, protected from yourself, and thwarted for your good, as really as God led His ancient Israel by a pillar of fire and of cloud, He will by His providence be with you still, until you reach your journey’s end, for His promise is, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

II. The sentiment in the text receives its fullest exemplification in the dispensation of grace. In a way the most improbable, and at a time the least expected, the God of all grace has laid hold upon the soul. Behold the woman of Samaria. She goes forth as usual to fill her vessel at the

well of Jacob: she finds a tired stranger sitting on the well, and perceives Him to be a Jew. She enters into a brief conversation with Him, and at length believes and acknowledges Him to be the Christ. Behold the assembly that stood before the apostle on the day of Pentecost. There are men of every nation, who have come up to Jerusalem, not to find salvation, but for trade and ceremonial worship. Among them are men whose hearts and hands are yet reeking with the Redeemer's blood. But there they stand, pricked to the heart, and crying, "men and brethren, what shall we do?" Behold the highway leading to Jericho. A crowd is collected to see a wonderful personage pass by. A publican is among them, who, for the purpose of better observation, climbs a tree by the roadside. The eye of Jesus is fixed upon him. The voice of the stranger addresses him: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house." The publican obeyed, received the Saviour joyfully, and from that hour became a new man.

It is, if not always, yet usually so. It is the rule rather than the exception. God is found of them that sought Him not. He meets the criminal in his dungeon, and reclaims him. Many times He meets the prodigal in his wretchedness, and feeds him from the plenteousness of the table of salvation. And sometimes—for we limit not the Holy One of Israel, whose ways are not our ways—sometimes He meets the dying sinner, as He did the thief upon the cross, when all hope of conversion seems preposterous. And thus He magnifies the power of His grace, and while "the heart of man deviseth his way, the Lord directeth his steps."

And the *means*, no less than the time and occasion, are of God. Perhaps the man thought to go up the slope of Calvary by some path of his own choosing: intending, when a convenient time had come, to seek salvation gently and leisurely as a matter of course. But it was not to be so. Some striking providence; some simple truth repeated in his hearing for the thousandth time; some whispered

admonition of a Christian friend ; awakes attention, excites to immediate consideration, and bows down the soul in true contrition and prayer for pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace. He had devised his way, but the Lord directed his steps.

Finally. There is yet another way in which the teaching of our text is most signally illustrated. Here is a believer who has been all his life-time in bondage through fear of death. And now his end has come. The silver cord will soon be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken. But to his surprise, his soul is calm. The destroyer has lost all his terrors. He no longer doubts his interest in Christ. But he now reads his title clear. And now he says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory." Wherefore comfort your hearts with these words.

W. E. SCHENCK.

ON FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

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Luke xi. 4.—"*And forgive us our sins.*"

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THE disciples had requested their Lord and Master to teach them how to pray, as John also taught his disciples. The Saviour furnished them with a model, of which the text is a part. And the petition is designed for all men, for all have sinned. The gospel recognises none as righteous ; all have, therefore, occasion to pray, "Forgive us our sins."

H

I. Let us enquire what this prayer means.

1. Whoever uses it from the heart, *confesses himself guilty before God*. The whole system of Christianity proceeds upon this ground. Its great topics are "atonement," "forgiveness," "mercy," "grace," "salvation." These have no appropriateness, save to the guilty and the lost. And in so dreadful a controversy between God and His creatures, there can be no question who is in the wrong: we are *righteously* condemned, and *lost by our own iniquities*. The prayer under consideration makes this confession of sin. Whoever uses it must be speechless in the judgment. He has known his sin; he has confessed it. His prayer testifies against him as a sinner, and will be recognised in the judgment as a confession of his guilt. If the petitioner does not mean this, then he speaks lies in hypocrisy. He virtually charges God with fraud in the whole framework of His gospel; with falsehood in His declarations concerning the guilt of man; with cruelty in the punishment which He inflicts in this world, and which He threatens to inflict in the world to come. He treats the great Jehovah as a being who can be pleased with insincere acknowledgments—with fawning, hollow-hearted confessions, that outrage all justice and all truth. There is no escape from this conclusion.

2. *We renounce, in this petition, all pretence of making satisfaction for our sins*. We plead no merit; we throw ourselves upon mere mercy; we simply ask forgiveness.

Some people seem to think, that their endeavours to do the best they can for the future will be set off against their past offences, and that they may cancel their sins by extraordinary merit. Or, if they have no merit beyond their present duty, they fancy that if they do that for a long time, God will by degrees forget their past offences. But this is not seeking *forgiveness*. This is not taking the benefit of *atonement*. This is not asking for *pardon*: it is endeavouring to make *satisfaction*. And to every one who resorts to

this mode of *salvation* by deeds of law, the Lord will *give law*, and not mercy. They are under the curse; they have fallen from the dispensation of grace, and must stand or fall by the law. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse;" "Christ shall profit you nothing;" "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are *fallen* from grace." But the prayer under consideration renounces all pretence of making satisfaction. We come to God making no plea but for *mercy*; endeavouring neither to palliate our guilt nor atone for it. We come seeking *forgiveness*—such forgiveness as will make us immeasurably indebted to the mere mercy of God.

3. We seek, under the name of forgiveness, the *remission of punishment*. I should never have thought of making this remark, had I not heard it gravely asserted, that there is never any forbearance of punishment; that every sin is punished just as much as it deserves. According to this newly invented gospel, God is so merciful that he will *remit* sins by punishing them; *forgive* by holding on to the penalty; *atone* for sins by the sacrifice of His Son, and yet make no difference in his treatment of the sinner. The mighty work of *redemption*; the astonishing exhibition of God's mercy through the *propitiation* of Christ; the *pardon*, the *grace*, the *forgiveness*, the *mercy* of the gospel, the *glad tidings* of great joy, that make earth and fill heaven with wonder:—all amount at last according to this theory, to nothing more than this—God treats the sinner just as He would have done without all this mighty movement. Justice takes its course; mercy, forgiveness, pardon, remission of sins, are mere names; they make no alteration in the course of God's treatment of the sinner. Salvation by grace is simply salvation by justice.

Verily this is another gospel. Its design seems to be, not to persuade men to *flee* from wrath, but to make up their minds to *bear* it. But this is not the gospel. The

gospel declares that "Christ hath *redeemed* us from the *curse* of the law." The lord who *forgave* his servant ten thousand talents, did not, as the act of forgiveness, cast him into prison till he should pay the uttermost farthing, he treated him as though he *owed him nothing*. So "being justified by the blood of Jesus, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." He that heareth Christ's word, and believeth on Him, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation*.

II. But how is this prayer to be made? I answer: it is to be made, admitting the full charge which God has brought against us in His word. In His view we are altogether unholy and vile; deserving of perdition, and fit only to be banished from His presence for ever. Though He is pitiful and ready to shew mercy, yet our desert is such, that His frown must shroud this earth as with the mantle of death, or His displeasure is not sufficiently manifested. So heinous is our sin, that not a son or daughter of Adam can be delivered from eternal wrath, without an adequate atonement. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." All the beasts of the field are not sufficient for sacrifice, nor is Lebanon sufficient to burn. Angels were not able to break the seals of our condemnation. There was found none in heaven able to open the book or to look thereon, till God's own Son cried, Father, spare the sinner: I give my life a ransom. He died to save them that were *lost*. And to save from what a punishment! O sinner, read in that wrath which burns with eternal fire, the estimate that God puts upon the sins that you regard so lightly!

Some persons can say carelessly, "Why, I repent every day: I never sin but I am sorry for it." "Ah! do you *forsake* your sins? Do you utterly renounce them with loathing? Is your heart broken? Do you now dread falling into sin, as you would falling into hell? This trifling sorrow, that does not subdue the soul, that does not melt

the heart, that does not change the temper or the life, is anything rather than the repentance of the Bible. If you do not *loathe* the sin ; if you are only sorry for the shame, while you love the sin as well as ever, you are not a true penitent before God. This is only the sorrow of the world, that worketh death.

Oh ! how often, dying sinner, have you said, "Forgive me my sins !" while you had not a spark of godly sorrow ! while you scarce thought on your heinous guilt, or formed the slightest purpose of forsaking the sins for which you asked pardon ! Then you mocked your God. Then you plunged yourself deeper in guilt. And yet this saying the prayer, "Forgive," perhaps warded off alarm from your mind, and conviction from your conscience. Oh ! let not your prayers be a mere mockery of God, and a means of hardening and deluding your own soul. Rather take the open ground of rebellion : spurn forgiveness, and *know* your standing ; and if you *will* rush upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, do it with your eyes open. Then, peradventure, some awful perception of danger may flash upon your soul, and make you relent before your doom is for ever sealed.

And how important to you is it, dying fellow-sinner, that you immediately find forgiveness ! In a little time your health will fail. The world will fade from your eyes. You must leave your business, your wealth, your friends, your pleasures, and go into eternity. You must appear before God in judgment. The books will be opened—the books that contain the record of your years, and months, and days, and hours ; the books that record your manner of life, your words, your deeds, your plans, your influence, your conduct in your stewardship here. All that God has done for you will be brought to mind : His earnest invitations, His many warnings, His solemn commands — everything will be brought to light. The Redeemer, who died for you, and who waited so long to save you, will then plead against you.

You are condemned : heaven is lost. You relent ; but it is too late. You cry for mercy ; but you are not answered. Your eternity begins with despair. The Almighty, the eternal, the unchangeable God has pronounced your doom. It can never be reversed. Are you prepared to endure all this ? Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong ?

Oh ! learn from the scenes of Calvary—learn from the opening records of eternity, of what moment it is that you find pardon now ; and with all the earnestness that the case demands, cry unto God for help. Come in the only way : by the cross of Christ. Trust in the Almighty Redeemer. Let go every other shield. View yourself as open to the thunderbolts of incensed justice, and let Christ be your only defence. Have done with all delay. Break at once from every yoke of Satan. Fear not man that shall die—fear none but God. Flee ! flee !—an undone wretch—for pardon, that you may lay hold on eternal life.

Will you *thus* pray for pardon ? Will you pray *now* ! As we bow before the throne of infinite love, will you now give yourself up to God ?

“ Now is the time He bends His ear,
And waits for your request ;
Come, lest He rouse His wrath, and swear
Ye shall not see My rest.”

E. HALL.

SORROW HUSHED.

I. Thessalonians, iv. 13.—“*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*”

CHRISTIANITY founds her claim to general reception upon doctrines most abasing to human pride, and facts calculated rather to repel than to invite human credulity. Her cardinal *doctrine*, which all the rest subserve, is the justification of a sinner, his deliverance from the bondage of his sin, and perfect happiness in heaven, through faith in a Saviour who Himself fell a victim to His enemies, and expired, as a malefactor, under the infamy of the cross. Nothing more repugnant to their preconceived notions was ever proclaimed in the ears of men. It is the object of their dislike, their derision, and their scorn. “We preach,” says the apostle, “Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” So it was at the beginning; so it is at the present hour, and so with the proud and carnal it will remain to the end.

The cardinal *fact* of Christianity, without which all her other facts lose their importance, is the resurrection from the dead of this same crucified Saviour, as the prelude and the pledge of the resurrection of His followers to eternal life. Against this great fact “the children of disobedience,” from the Pharisees of Jerusalem down to the scoffers of the nineteenth century, have levelled their batteries. One assails its proof; another its reasonableness; all its truth. When Paul asserted it before an audience of Athenian philosophers, *some mocked*,—a short method of refuting the gospel; and likely, from its convenience, to continue in favour and in fashion.

Yet with such doctrines and facts did the religion of Jesus make her way through the world. Against the superstition of the multitude—against the interest, influence, and craft of their priesthood—against the ridicule of wits, the reasoning of sages, the policy of cabinets, and the prowess of armies—against the axe, the cross, and the stake, she extended her conquests from the Jordan to the Thames. She gathered her laurels alike upon the snows of Scythia, the green fields of Europe, and the sands of Africa. The altars of impiety crumbled before her march—the glimmer of the schools disappeared in her light. Power felt his arm wither at her glance; and, in a short time, she who went, forlorn and insulted, from the hill of Calvary to the tomb of Joseph, ascended the imperial throne, and waved her banner over the palace of the Cæsars. Her victories were not less benign than decisive. They were victorious over all that pollutes, degrades and ruins man: in behalf of all that purifies, exalts, and saves him. They subdued his understanding to truth, his habits to rectitude, his heart to happiness. In an appeal to their own experience, the apostle thus testifies to the believers of Thessalonica—"They themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and the true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."

The change from pagan to Christian character; from midnight darkness to light in the Lord, was abundantly visible, and not to be explained but upon the principles of Christianity itself. Yet, without detracting from the glory of those divine influences, which wrought effectually in the conversion of men of every rank and class by the first missionaries of the gospel, we must not ascribe to primitive believers an eminence in knowledge and purity, consistent neither with the laws of our nature nor the testimony of holy writ. Falling short of them in zeal, in love; in

promptitude of action, in patience of suffering, we regard them as a sort of human angels with whom we may not venture to claim connection. But when emotion yields to thought, and reason balances facts, we recover from the fond illusion. We see them to have been "men of like passions" with ourselves; subject to erroneous conceptions, to rash judgments, to groundless fears, to irregular conduct. Let the Thessalonian Christians be our example. Collected from Jews and Gentiles, they could not rid themselves, at once, of their old prepossessions. Now and then, the Jewish tradition on the Pagan feeling would obtrude into the sanctuary of their consolation in Christ. Some of them, led by a then popular opinion, that their Lord was shortly to appear, and tinctured with the doctrine of the Rabbis, mourned over the supposed diminution of happiness to their friends who had died without beholding the glorious advent of the Messiah's reign. Others, through the recurrence of early impressions, the objections of their heathen neighbours, and, it may be, assiduities of false teachers, seem to have been drawn into doubts concerning the resurrection itself, and, of course, the safety of their friends who had died in the faith. The native tendency of such apprehensions was to weigh down their spirits; to check their ardour; to shake their constancy under persecution; and to make them sorrow as those who have no hope.

To rectify their mistake, and establish them under their trial, is the design of the text and its connection. And although it was originally addressed to the Thessalonians, yet it is the common property of Christians; and is one of those sacred portions of Holy Scripture "written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Let us then ponder its import. It contains in general an affectionate counsel against depression of heart at the death of believing friends.

What is this counsel? It is so to cherish the knowledge

of the gospel, and faith in its consoling doctrines, as to place, at an immeasurable distance, our grief and the grief of unbelievers, when our beloved friends die in the Lord. "I would not," says St. Paul, "have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep: that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope." It is evident from this, that they had been recently called to part with some dear and valued friends who had fallen asleep in Jesus. And to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle bids them to hush their grief, and not yield to despair as did the heathen who were destitute of all hope of a future life, and who buried all their expectations of seeing their friends again, in the grave with their mortal remains.

Death is, in itself, a most serious and distressful event. It is nature's supreme evil—the abhorrence of God's creation—a monster from whose touch and sight every living thing recoils. And hence, to shrink from its ravages upon ourselves, or upon those whom we love, is not an argument of weakness, but an act of obedience to the first law of being—a tribute to the value of that life which is our Maker's gift.

The disregard which some of old affected to whatever goes by the name of evil; the insensibility of others who yield up their souls to the power of fatalism; and the artificial gaiety which has, occasionally, played the comedian about the dying bed of "philosophy, falsely so called," are outrages upon decency and nature. Death destroys both action and enjoyment—mocks at wisdom, strength and beauty—disarranges our plans—robs us of our earthly treasures—desolates our bosoms—breaks our heart-strings—blights our hope. It extinguishes the glow of kindness—severs man from all that is human, and from all he knows and loves in the world—subjects him to an ordeal, which thousands of millions have passed, but none can explain; and which will be as new to the last who gives up the ghost, as it was to murdered Abel—flings him, in

face, without any avail from the experience of others, into a state of untried being. No wonder that nature trembles before it. Reason justifies the fear. Religion never makes light of it: and he who does, instead of ranking with heroes, can hardly deserve to be placed on a level with a brute.

Yet it is not the amount of actual suffering inflicted by the loss of beloved friends that constitutes the element of our sorrow. It is from futurity that grief, no less than consolation, derives its power. The tears of separation will soon dry up, when we expect to regain what we have lost. But it is when there is no expectation that nature sickens, and joy expires. Oh! who can paint the anguish of the *last* look! Who can endure the distraction of that word *for ever*! Who that has any thought of hereafter—that but inclines to the belief that man dieth not as beast dieth, can sustain the rackings of wild uncertainty, unable to surmise whither the dear departed one has gone, and what may be its condition of being?

This was the state of the pagan world. In the death of their friends they had no hope. True, they were not altogether without the notion of the existence of a soul detached from its body, or of happiness in a life to come. Tradition, prompted and fortified by the yearnings of nature, had preserved among the uneducated, the poets, and a few sober philosophers, something akin to the truth. But all their conceptions were so obscure, so unwarranted, and therefore so unsatisfying, that they were rather the confused images of a dream, than the clear discoveries of rational thought and inquiry. They were sufficient to agitate, but not to convince; to torment the mind with anxiety without relieving by a single ray of assurance the inward conflict; while the flickering hope which they fostered, was, for every purpose of consolation and peace, no hope at all.

Conjecture they did, but they knew nothing of the state of departed man. Whether his soul survived the body—

whether it remained conscious after death—whether, if conscious, it possessed any power of retrospect over earthly scenes—whether it was, or was not, immortal—whether at death it entered upon a fixed state of sorrow or of joy, of shame or honour—these were questions on which they were ignorant. Yet they were not wholly unconcerned about them. Many who enjoy the pure light of the gospel, and are wont to boast of their liberal attainments, in the great and terrible day of the Lord, may not be unwilling to exchange condition with the least enlightened of the heathen world.

And as the Gentiles were ignorant respecting the separate existence of the soul, they were equally in the dark with respect to the resurrection of the body. Flesh and blood could not reveal it to them. There are sighings, misgivings, reverential feelings towards the dead, analogies of nature, which eagerly fall in with the doctrine of the resurrection once made known; but which could never lead to the discovery, or even suspicion, of its truth. The apostles who taught it, were, in the first instance, regarded as fanatics or madmen. In respect to the body, therefore, death brought with him into every Pagan house, dejection, despondence, dark despair.

Under these circumstances, what shall arrest the current of mourning, and lamentation, and woe? Where is the voice of the Comforter? Or what bosom can find room for peace, which affords no entrance to hope?

Such was Paganism, bending over the remains of a deceased friend. Such, too, was Judaism, after it had rejected the hope of Israel and the Saviour thereof. Such is the gloomy condition still of the millions of Jews and Gentiles who know not God, or the gospel of His salvation.

And wherein have unbelievers, among ourselves, the pre-eminence? What have they to gild their evening hour, to bind up their aching head, to soothe their troubled pillow? What living hope descends from heaven to smile on the

pallid features, whisper peace to the flitting spirit, and announce to the weeping relatives that all is well? There is none. It is all a blank. Dismay, darkness, melancholy boding, are the portion of their cup. Sit down, ye unhappy, in the desolation of grief. Consolation extends not to *your* house of mourning: ye have rejected her overtures of mercy, slighted her gentle voice of entreaty, and dashed the cup of salvation from your lips: "ye have no hope."

But, Christians, believers in the Lord Jesus, ye who have committed the interests of your souls to Him who has loved you and given Himself for you, your condition is widely different. You have strong consolation, and a good hope through grace. You, too, must resign, many of you have already resigned, believing friends and kindred, to the stroke of death. The pangs of separation you have felt, and more you will yet feel. You are not forbidden to mourn. The smitten heart will bleed: the workings of nature must have vent. It is right. Tears were not made that they should never be shed. The passion of grief was not implanted only to be stifled. God's gifts to us in the persons of those whom He animates with His love, beautifies with His image, and honours with His communion, are too precious to be relinquished without emotion. It would be a strange way of glorifying Him for the best of His earthly blessings, to behave, when they are removed, as if they were not worth a thought. Nor could there be a fouler stain upon the religion of the cross, than a tendency to extinguish affections calculated, in a peculiar manner, to lessen the evils of our miserable world. No! the grace which bringeth salvation does not destroy, but restore, the man. All that belongs to him, excepting sin and its effects, she regulates, purifies and exalts. Jesus, the perfection of moral beauty, wept at the grave of His friend. He has both vindicated and dignified by His example, the most sacred of our social feelings. And if we, sharing His sympathy, weep at the tomb of those who are not less His friends than

our own, we are so much the more conformed to the likeness of *the man of sorrows*, who was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin.

Settle it, therefore, Christian brethren, as a principle not to be shaken, that your religion disclaims alike all kindred with apathy on the one hand, and the ebullition of un-governed grief on the other. Mourn you may, when the desire of your eyes is taken away; but you must not mourn as those who have no hope. Hope, even the sweetest that can lodge in the human breast, is yours. Let your mourning, therefore, be tempered, submissive, holy. Yield not to brooding sadness. Transfer your tears from the cold face of your friend to the feet of your Master: and there compose your souls to serenity and peace. This is the counsel of my text. On what grounds it is offered; the reason why it should have a complete ascendancy over our minds, and the consolation which the gospel affords to all who cordially and faithfully believe its doctrines, are stated in the following verse; which we will bring before you in the next discourse. In the mean time, may God commend His blessing! Amen.

J. M. MASON, D.D.

THE GROUNDS OF CONSOLATION



1. Thess. iv. 14.—“*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even, so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.*”



The design of the apostle in the last five verses of this chapter, is to comfort the Thessalonians under the bereavements from which they had suffered. It appears from the drift of his argument, that some of their number had recently died; and to console the church under the losses

of beloved friends, he reminds them that those believers who had been removed by death, were as persons in a sweet and gentle slumber, and would be raised up in the last day. They might mourn over their graves, but not as the heathen who had no hope, since the resurrection of the saints was as certain as that Jesus died and rose again. If they believed the one, they ought also to believe the other. As the Head was raised, so will also the members be.

This is the ground of the consolation which St. Paul places before the Christian converts at Thessalonica. It consists of three particulars: the nature of the death of departed saints—their condition in and after it—and the assured prospect of their glorious resurrection to eternal life.

First. The very nature of death as it comes to believers, is an antidote to excessive sorrow. They *sleep*. It is a beautiful image, not that we are to imagine, with some dreaming speculatists, that the souls of the righteous remain unconscious and torpid during the period that elapses between the death and resurrection of their bodies. This cheerless doctrine found no place in the faith and theology of Paul. He had no cause to congratulate the church, as he does in the 12th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, on her coming "to the spirits of just men made perfect," if, instead of beholding the face of God in light and glory, they are inert and insensible as a clod. Nor could he who longed to depart and be with Christ; and who accounted it the same thing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord, suppose, that all his faculties and affections were to be suspended; and all his opportunities of serving the Redeemer to be taken away by death, for scores of centuries together. The notion is utterly absurd.

In the ears of faith, the words of the apostle have quite another sound. They are fraught with consolation, fragrant as the breath of the morning, refreshing as the dews of heaven. It is a delightful truth, that the bodies of the

saved rest in their graves at death. But it is chiefly in reference to their happy decease—their safe and comfortable departure, combined as it is with the dissolution of the mortal frame, that the Scriptures say, they *sleep*.

Death brings no *peril* to a child of God. It ought to be no more an object of his fear than the approach of sleep at the close of day. I speak not of the physical pangs of dying, to which our animal part never can, nor should be reconciled. I speak of death as affecting our *moral* being. In the view of nature he is rightly named the “king of terrors,” because to ungodly men he is “the wages of sin.” It is from guilt that he draws his terrifying power. He announces to the wicked the end of their probation; the filling up of their cup; and if they be not alarmed, it is because they are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Their stupidity will only serve to heighten their surprise and consternation in the eternal world. But Jesus, having delivered His people from the wrath to come, and redeemed them from the curse of the law, has for them stripped death of his terrors, and given them authority to sing, as He hands them over the threshold of life—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In such a case death deserves not the name. It is but a sleep; sleep in its most heavenly form; sleep in Jesus.

And as there is no peril now, so neither is there any *grief, toil, or fatigue*. While the day lasts, we must bear its burden and its heat. I shall not dwell upon the pains and endurances of a Christian soldier—his fight of faith—his race for the prize—his conflict with flesh and blood; and what is more, with principalities and powers—his weakness, his weariness, his falls, his recoveries; in a word, his many and great vicissitudes. The point before us is the *end*—it is peace. To others, death is, emphatically,

the beginning of sorrows—to a Christian, the termination. Then and there, grief and he have parted. The hour of release has come. He bids adieu to the field of battle. He puts off his harness; he lays his head on the bosom of the Captain of his salvation, and goes quietly to sleep. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Secondly. Observe the condition. He sleeps in *Jesus*. It is not merely a calm repose, a gentle slumber in the hope of waking again; it is sleep in Christ, free from pain and sorrow, and with the certainty of being raised again. Thus a Christian poet has correctly versified the image—

“They sleep in Jesus and are bless’d,
How kind their slumbers are!
From sufferings and from sins released,
And freed from every snare.”

Death, which dissolves every other tie, touches not our union with the blessed Redeemer, our elder Brother. Even then His saints are in Him, as much as when they were serving Him in their mortal life. The body dies; change it must; the process of taking it down has commenced ere it be consigned to the dust. It must see corruption. Be it so, it is still the Saviour’s property; still an object of His care and love. This makes their death and their dust precious in His sight. Dead they are, but they are dead in Christ. They sleep in Jesus. Such is the condition of our pious friends now in the grave. Are we Christians? I do not ask, if we profess Christianity, if our creed be scriptural, if our names are found in the register of the baptized, and enrolled in the number of the confirmed; but are we born of the Spirit—led by the Spirit—sanctified by the Spirit? Are we seeking the kingdom of God by faith in the blood of Christ? Then, if so, as those who have crossed the Jordan rest from their labours, so shall we when our work is done, and we have finished our course.

Once more. We derive consolation under the death of Christian friends, from the prospect of their *glorious resur-*

rection. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." This is a doctrine that stands forth most prominently in the sacred volume. Whatever may have been the disputes of men about other doctrines of Christianity, no man can deny that it teaches the resurrection of the body. Men may ask, as certain sceptics did of old, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" And they may mock at the doctrine, like the men of Athens, when St. Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection; but the jeers of the infidel are no answer to the statement. We take the fact as we find it announced, and will briefly glance at the nature of the doctrine as it comes before us in the pages of the Christian revelation.

The sentiment is, that the clay we commit to the grave under the universal sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," will be quickened again, and reassume, after the slumber of ages, the organization, the lineaments, and the expression of that self-same human being with whom we were conversant upon earth. Otherwise it were a new creation, and not a resurrection. It has been questioned whether Christian friends will know each other in the world of the risen. But why not? Did not the disciples know the Lord Jesus after His resurrection? Did they not know Him at the moment of His ascension? Shall the body which the Son of God wore upon earth be the only one recognised in heaven? If Peter and Paul, if James and John, shall not be able to distinguish each other, upon what principle shall they be able to distinguish their Lord? And why should the body be raised at all, if the associations with which its reappearance is connected are to be broken and lost?

It cannot be. But then the body will be raised with properties suited to the new state of being and action on which the saints shall enter. God shall bring those who have died in the faith, at the resurrection of the just, and

the spirits meeting with their respective bodies raised from the grave, will mingle with the saints then alive, but changed in the twinkling of an eye into perfect purity, and adorned with the likeness of their Lord, shall all unite to swell the triumph of His train. The transformation shall pass upon the body without destroying its sameness ; while the body that shall be will be fitted for the occupations and enjoyments of the heavenly world.

But how are these wonderful transformations to be effected ? How ? By that same *Power* which calleth things that be not as though they were. This is our short answer. I cannot open my ears to the objections of unbelief. We are upon too high ground to stoop to the caviller, who marshals his ignorance and imbecility against the knowledge and might of God. Let him puzzle his intellect with theories about personal identity ; let him talk about one part of the body interred in Asia, another in Africa, and a third in Europe ; let him ask as many questions as he can devise about limbs devoured by ravenous animals, and become by nutrition part of their bodies—which bodies have again, by the same process, passed into the flesh of other animals, and these, in their turn, consumed by man : let him ask such questions, and ten thousand like them. Hast thou done ? Dost thou not err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God ? It will be time enough to plead thy difficulties when the Creator shall commit to thee the raising of the dead. For us it is sufficient that He who rears up the living blade from the rotted grain, will be at no loss to rear up an incorruptible from a corrupted body, whatever may have been the number and variety of the forms and changes through which it has passed.

This, my Christian brethren, is your consolation. This is the good hope through grace : a hope which all the crowns and treasures of earth are infinitely too poor to purchase or to balance. And it is hope that maketh not ashamed. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." As the Lord Jesus died, so He rose again as the head and representative of the Redeemed. He bought them unto God by His blood ; and He came back from the grave to shew that the ransom was accepted. His resurrection, therefore, is a pledge from the living God to His church—to the universe—that all who die in faith shall rise in glory. Christ is the first-fruits ; His people the harvest that shall follow.

In this faith the Apostles laboured, and the martyrs bled. Ages have elapsed, and it is still the same. It is not a distant wonder—not a brilliant vision ; but a solid and present reality, under the power of which, at this moment, Christians are closing their eyes to sleep in Jesus. Bring, therefore, my brethren, these glorious truths and these bright prospects before your minds, to alleviate your sorrows under the bereavements of life. You are assured that those who have died in the faith will not always lie in the ground ; and that in the winding up of this world's history, all believers, living and dead, will be received into heaven, to dwell for ever with the Lord. "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words."

JOHN M. MASON, D.D.

THE SEA YIELDING UP THE DEAD.

Revelation **xx.** 13.—"*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it.*"

THE doctrine of the resurrection was a prominent theme in the ministry of the Apostles. Peter preached it to the Scribes and Rulers of Jerusalem, and Paul did the same to

the Philosophers of Athens. And what thoughts struggle within us as we look forward to such a change ! But the doctrine is not an article of natural religion. It is purely a truth of revelation, and becomes known to us exclusively from the oracles of scripture.

In the pages of the Sacred Volume, the scenes of this event come before us arrayed in imagery at once terrible and glorious. In the heavens, thronged by thousands of angels, is seen the descending throne, before it sits the Son of Man, the once crucified Nazarene, now the judge of quick and dead. Before Him the material heavens are rolled together as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat. The Creator by one word had accomplished the miracle of creation ; and now, His mere glance shakes it to its centre, and awes it into preparation for His coming. The trumpet sounds. The earth heaves with inward commotions. Its dead—its ancient dead—all the buried of forgotten tribes, and of antediluvian times are coming, more numerous than the hosts ever mustered by earthly monarchs in the battle field. The patriarchs who lived when the world was young, and the generations to be born when it is grown old, shall all meet at the judgment seat. From this tribunal there is no appeal, and of the sentence then to be uttered there can be no reversal, and no revision.

It will truly be a scene of solemn interest. The ungodly will meet there the righteous who warned him in vain, and whose warnings are now to be verified. Parents and children—pastors and people—all the connections of earth which time had for awhile sundered, will there recognize each other. It will be a fearful meeting to those who will be compelled to encounter those whose death they had occasioned. The murderer now must confront his victim. Cain and Abel, who have been perhaps parted from the hour when the fratricide fled from the scene of his crime, and the breathless body of his brother lay bleeding in the dust, will now meet again. The seducer and the seduced—

the robber and the robbed—the slanderer and the slandered will stand face to face, and every one shall be judged according to his works. And there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed.

But if it be fearful to meet those on whom man may have inflicted the death of the body, how much more awful still will it be to meet those whose souls man has aided in ruining for ever ! It will be sad for Caiaphas to meet the innocent Messiah, whom he adjudged to temporal death ; but judging from the value of the soul, it will be still more terrible for the Jewish High Priest to face there his kindred and friends, whose unbelief his arguments sealed, and whose impenitence his example confirmed. The meetings of the resurrection will therefore form no small portion of its terrors.

From the general view of the case, let us now turn our attention to the fact averred in the text—the sea giving up its dead.

There are many reasons for the opinion, that the sea will be found thickly peopled with the mortal remains of mankind. In the earlier ages of the world, in consequence of man's comparative ignorance of navigation, the sea served as a barrier, keeping apart the tribes of opposite shores, who might else have met only for mutual slaughter and extermination. But in process of time, the ocean that once separated, has in the progress of art and discovery, become the medium of uniting the nations. It has been for centuries the great highway of traffic—a highway on which the builder cannot encroach, the monarch close its gates, or the mighty of the earth engross the travelling. It has thus to many an adventurous voyager, proved his place of burial.

But it has been also the scene of battle and deadly warfare, no less than the highway of commerce. On its surface have been decided many of those slaughtering conflicts which have determined the destinies of nations and the government of empires. It was on the sea, in the fight of

Salamis, that the fleets of Greece and Persia contended, whether the despotism and wealth of the East should extend their sway over the freedom and arts of the West. It was in the sea fight of Actium, that the imperial power of Rome then claiming the dominion of the world, was assured to Augustus and his successors, and the way was prepared for the universal peace that reigned at our Saviour's birth. On this element was fought the battle of Sepanto, where the right arm of the Ottoman was broken. And as we come down to our own times, we shall read of battles upon the deep which have affected in no small degree, the destinies of Europe and the whole civilized world. All these have served to gorge the sea with the corpses of men.

And then it has had its shipwrecks. Whatever the skill and science of the architect in building the vessel, or the manner in navigating it, there are scenes on the ocean when man feels his insignificance. If He who holds the winds in the hollow of His hand should let them loose, the foaming billows will soon teach the hapless voyager his dependence upon God. How many, in all ages since the sea has been made the road to discovery and gain, have perished in the waters, foundering in the midnight storm, driven on the unsuspected rocks, engulfed by the whirlpool, or dashed by winds against some iron-bound coast ! It is calculated by some, that with all the art and expenditure devised for the mariners' security, no less than one thousand ships, large and small, and ten thousand human beings are on the average every year lost at sea.

The sea, then, has its dead. And when the trump is blown, and the voice of the archangel peals through the universe, this mausoleum of waters shall disgorge its prey. The gold and the jewels it has accumulated, and all the rich freights it has swallowed down, will be permitted to be unreclaimed ; but no relic that has formed part of the body of one child of Adam will be suffered to slumber there. The invalid who, in quest of health, embarked on its waves, but

died on his voyage ; the pirate, flung from the deck which he had made slippery with blood ; the emigrant that perished on his way to a land of strangers ; the wretched slave, groaning out his spirit into the hands of God amidst the horrors of the Middle Passage ; the sailor, dropped from the yard-arm in some midnight gale ; the whole population of the globe that perished in the avenging deluge, when Noah and his family alone escaped : all will arise at that summons.

And there will be a meeting of those raised from the sea, and those raised from the land. Many of the former are the near connexions and kindred of the latter. Among those who shall be restored from the waters of the deep, will be some who quitted home expecting a speedy return, and for whose coming attached friends and kindred looked long and anxiously, and looked in vain. The exact mode, and cause, and hour of their death will remain unknown till the final day shall declare it. And then will be revealed how far the parents and friends of the youth that has "drank death among the waves," neglected or instructed him in the way of piety and the fear of God.

Let it be also remembered, that a large proportion of those who have perished in the sea, perished there in the *service* of the landsman. The mariner found his watery grave while executing the commands of his merchant master. Some on voyages of discovery for the purpose of enlarging the bounds of knowledge, and opening new marts of traffic. Numbers have thus fallen victims to commercial enterprise. The looms and forges of Britain could not continue to work, and famine would stalk through her cities, did not her ships bear abroad the manufactures of her artizans to every clime. And if we look to our homes, we see how many of its delicacies, and luxuries, and comforts are brought to us from distant lands by the sailor's skill and bravery. And our agriculture needs his aid. The corn of the North, and the cotton of the South, would find little vent, were not the

ships ready to bear them to a market. They have served the church also. By them the missionary is wafted to his station in the heathen world. By them hundreds of thousands of Bibles in different languages have been transmitted to the nations of the earth. By them, in a word, the scholar has been supplied with books for the prosecution of his studies, brought from far distant countries of the earth.

Others of those buried in the waters have lost their lives in *defence* of those upon the shore. The possessions, the liberties, the families, the lives of the dwellers at home, have been protected by strangers who have died in warfare, leagues away on the deep sea. And not a few of the hardy sons of the billow and the wave, will be found to have perished through the neglect and cupidity of those who have hired them for gain. Alas! neither by influence, nor prayers, nor alms, did they attempt to relieve his temporal—certainly not his spiritual—destitution. And as far as this neglect operated to form the habits that contributed to his death, so far it cannot be pleasant to think of meeting him again to stand with us before the judgment seat.

But there is yet one view of the case more painful still. Many who have expired on the sea will be found to have been *victims to the sins* of those upon land. How many of the dead, over whom the dark blue sea rolls its waters, have perished year by year in the nefarious slave trade! It is said by an eminent writer, “such is the large proportion of the miserable children of Africa who die on the voyage, that, along the ordinary course of the slave ship from the eastern shores of Africa to our own continent, the deep must be strewn, and the bottom of the sea, at some portions of the way, paved with the remains of those who have been torn from their country and home, by the order or connivance of the slave-trader.” In the day of the resurrection, that mass of skeletons will rise; and the voice of wailing and accusation, stilled for centuries beneath the waters, will be lifted up to be silent no more for ever! And so it

may be said of every other form of wickedness, of which those who sail in our ships are rendered the instruments or the victims. The keeper of the dram-shop, and of her whose house is the way to hell, where the neglected sailor is taught to forget God and harden himself in iniquity, will not find it a light thing in the great day of retribution, to encounter those whom they have made their prey. The seaman may not have died in drunken riot on the premises of the tempter, where he was first lessoned in the ways of ruin; but he will rise, when the sea shall give up its dead, to meet the guilty authors, whose impiety and influence made him the merriest and boldest scoffer of the crew.

And now, in conclusion, I would ask, in that day when the inhabitants of the earth and sea shall meet in the judgment, where do *you* propose to stand? Is it among the saved, or the lost; the holy, or the sinful; at the right hand of the Judge, or at the left? Purposes of partial reformation cannot save you. Your *intention* to repent at some future time cannot avail. Christ is now willing to be gracious. He is now an Advocate; soon He will be the Avenger. Heaven stoops to win you. Hell rises to allure and destroy you. Oh! yield not to Satan. Reject not the Redeemer. Embrace the overtures of His mercy; and then, whether you rise from the deep, or from your bed of dust, you will enter into the joy of your Lord.

W. K. WILLIAMS, D.D.

THE DEATH OF JAMES BY THE SWORD OF HEROD.

Acts xii. 1, 2, 3.—“Now about that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread.”

THE sceptre had now departed from Judah, and the throne of David was filled by an alien. That alien was Herod, an Edomite, as is supposed, whom the Romans had raised to the supreme power. Already, two monarchs of this name had filled the throne of Judea, Herod the Great, and Herod Antipas, each of whom had signalized his reign by a deed of atrocious cruelty. The babes of Bethlehem had perished by the merciless decree of the first Herod; John the Baptist had fallen a sacrifice to the wounded pride of the second; and now that these oppressors had gone to their account, a third Herod stands up in their room, inheriting, along with the throne, the evil disposition of his predecessors. “Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church.” When persecutors are so placed as that they dare not employ open violence against the Church, craft oftentimes is made to serve their turn. Herod stretched forth his hands, not to *slay*, but to *vex* certain of the Church. His proceedings, in all probability, wore the colour of law. Some miserable pretext or other was found, on which to subject those who differed from him in religion, to manifold annoyances, to visit them with fines, to despoil them of their goods, to cast them into prison; in short, to inflict upon them every disgrace and hardship short of death. As yet he hesitated to avow it, as the leading principle of his government, that difference of

opinion in matters of religion, was, in his eyes, a crime so great as to be atoned for only with life; that one might be an idolater, or of no religion at all, and be perfectly safe, but if he were a Christian, if he worshipped God in the way that Herod and the people of the Jews called heresy, he would be held guilty of an offence against the State of so aggravated a character as scarcely to be expiated even with his blood. This principle Herod had adopted; nay, he had begun to act upon it. He did not know whether such an avowal would be tolerated, and therefore he found, meanwhile, some colourable pretence for his violent and illegal proceedings.

Persecution is as impolitic as it is sinful; it is even more opposed to the interests of the persecuter than to those of the persecuted. On whom is it that its exterminating violence falls? On those precisely who are the most sober, the most industrious, and the most loyal in the community; on those who are the salt of the empire. Persecution, therefore, tends to destroy every cause, save that against which it is employed. It endangers the stability of the throne, by removing its bravest defenders; it inflicts a fatal blow on the cause of order, by cutting off the most enlightened friends of order; it engenders hypocrisy, sows distrust, and breeds faction; it deprives a country of all those who enriched it by their industry, and adorned it by their virtues; and thus cripples all its resources, both physical and moral. Look at those kingdoms of Europe which were the scene, in former days, of the most lengthened persecutions. Are they not, to this day, monuments of the impolicy of attempting by violence to extinguish the rights of conscience? Their fields withered—their people impoverished—their government torn and enfeebled—their resources gone, proclaim the folly of warring against opinion with the sword. The evils which have followed in their case, will assuredly follow in all similar cases. This truth, history has taught the world over and over

again ; how long shall it be till bigots and persecutors learn the lesson ?

Hitherto, those of least note in the Church had been the main sufferers from the violence of Herod, but now the storm of persecution took a higher direction, and fell with a deadly force on the most distinguished of the Church's members. The hands of the king were already stained with oppression, but now they were stained with blood, and that the blood of an apostle, "he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword." This apostle was called at an early period of our Lord's ministry. In his youth, he dwelt by the lake of Galilee, the loved resort of the Saviour during the days of his flesh : on the waters of this beautiful lake, James, like others of the apostles, had prosecuted his calling as a fisherman. As he sat one day in the ship of Zebedee, his father, mending his nets, Jesus passed by and called him. Instantly he left the ship and his father, and followed Jesus. On several occasions, during his attendance on Christ, James was specially distinguished and honoured. When Christ ascended the Mount to be transfigured, he was accompanied, not by all the apostles, for He judged it meet that this scene of celestial splendour should be seen only by some of them. Three disciples were selected to be the witnesses of His glory, and James was one of the three. As he was honoured to ascend the bright Mount where Christ was transfigured, so was he also honoured to descend into the dark valley where his Master endured His agony. Peter, James, and John, were the three chosen companions of their Lord amid the terrors of Gethsemane, as they had been amid the glories of transfiguration. But now a higher honour was accorded to James. Of all the apostles, he was the first to die for his Master.

The cause which drew down the displeasure of the tyrant first of all on this apostle, is not specified. Some part of his conduct, doubtless, had given offence to the king. Christ had named him a son of thunder ; and this allows us to

hazard a conjecture as to the nature of his offence. Gifted with a dauntless spirit, and wielding a powerful eloquence, he was not one to sit quietly by and allow Herod unreprieved to lay waste the Church. He took his stand in the tyrant's path, and paying but little respect, we may well believe, to the kingly diadem, when it served but to give authority to oppression, he said to Herod, "touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," and thundered against him the doom by which every oppressor of the Church of God shall sooner or later be overtaken. But in the absence of all authentic information regarding the offence given by the apostle, let it suffice that James was now slain; and if the blood of God's saints—of the least of saints, is precious, how much more the blood of an apostle? Christ had exalted him to a throne, and empowered him, along with his brethren, to sit and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. It was from this throne that Herod dared to pull him down. To him had Christ given the commission, "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature." It was in the execution of this commission that his life was taken away. And if he who shall stop the ambassador of an earthly king shall not be held guiltless, what shall be done to the man who shall arrest the progress, and shed the blood of the ambassador of the King of kings? Nor was it James only who was now slain. Who can tell how many souls might have been rescued from perishing eternally, and brought to the possession of eternal life, through his instrumentality, had he not been thus prematurely cut off? All these were slain when James was slain. It was not the blood of one man, but of myriads, that the tyrant now brought upon himself. The crime of Herod was a crime against the world, inasmuch as it stopped one of the main channels appointed by Christ for conveying the knowledge of salvation to the world.

With regard to the manner of his death, we are told that he was slain with the sword. There were four modes of

capital punishment in use among the Jews : slaying with the sword was one of them, and it was accounted the most ignominious of them all. To this mode of death was James subjected ; Herod designing hereby, we doubt not, to vilify and degrade him : but this the power of the tyrant could not do. Death he may inflict ; disgrace he cannot. He may write against him a long array of crimes, he may cast him into prison as a felon, or bring him forth to die in the company of malefactors : James is an honoured apostle and a holy venerable martyr notwithstanding. The gloom of the dungeon and the horrors of the scaffold cannot stain the purity of his character, or dim the splendour of his virtues. His blood dyes the floor of his prison, but that bespeaks only the cruelty of Herod, and the noble stedfastness and constancy which that cruelty could not subdue. Better, far better, to lie here with James, than with Herod to fill a throne which a deed so foul has disgraced and tarnished.

The church beheld with dismay the fall of the apostle. But great as was her loss when James was slain, this event appeared to be only the beginning of sorrows—the forerunner of still greater calamities. No remorse or compunction visited the breast of the tyrant when the cruel deed was accomplished ; nay, the blood he had shed only prompted the desire to shed more. One apostle had been slain, what should hinder Herod from slaying another, and another, till at last not one apostle or minister should remain to the church ? Such, indeed, appeared to be now the fixed purpose of his breast ; nor did he delay in having recourse to the steps necessary for giving that purpose effect. The vigorous mental qualities with which Peter was endowed, the zeal and intrepidity which had distinguished him from the first in the cause of his Master, and the conspicuous place which these had given him amongst the apostles, pointed him out as the next victim of the tyrant. Accordingly, he was immediately seized ; and though the blood of James was yet scarce dry on the floor of his prison, Peter

was thrust into it, to endure, after the lapse of a few days, the same ignominious and cruel fate which had closed so prematurely the life and labours of his fellow-apostle.

But what was it that emboldened Herod to proceed to this second act of violence? But a little while ago saw him proceeding with great timidity and caution; but now every restraint is cast aside, blood is to be poured forth as water, and one apostle is to be struck down after another. The guilt of persecution can never rest altogether with the rulers of the country. The tongue that applauds, or, having the opportunity, refuses to condemn the shedding righteous blood, brings upon itself the guilt of that blood, not less than the hand that perpetrates the deed. Of this we are reminded when we read, "Because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." Herod had put to death one charged with no crime but that of worshipping God according to the commands of Christ; and had he looked into the word of God, or consulted his own conscience, he would have felt that by this act he had exposed himself to the vengeance of that God who has said. "Thou shalt not kill." But instead of looking within, as if he anticipated the verdict, and wished to appeal to another and more favorable tribunal, he looked abroad, to see what judgment should be formed of his conduct by the world; and, unhappily for Herod, not only the sycophants of his court, but even the people of the Jews, applauded it as done in the service of religion, and well-pleasing to God. Foremost and loudest, we may be sure, among those who now carried their congratulations to the foot of the throne, were the priests and scribes; for when was it that a persecuting monarch lacked a tribe of hireling priests, prepared to insult and vilify religion, by using her holy name as an excuse for the foulest crimes? Thus the reproaches of Herod's conscience were drowned in the applause of the people. "It pleased the Jews." But, oh! what a miserable principle of action! He who walks by such a rule shall

infallibly offend God and destroy himself. What shall it profit a man, though he should gain the approbation of the whole world, if he lose the esteem of Him whose esteem alone is worth possessing? Let the world's applause be ever so loud; let it roll like thunder from one end of heaven to the other, and from one age of time to another; yet shall its mighty roar be hushed and forgotten in the dread silence of the judgment seat. Ah! what will avail the fading laurels with which applauding nations may have strewed our path, or decked our tomb, if on that morning we come forth to shame and everlasting contempt! It is the misery of princes, that they are addressed so seldom in the language of truth, and that they consult so seldom the word of God and their own consciences, as to the character of their actions. They judge it sufficient if they come up, or nearly so, to the requirements of that code which flattery and fashion have devised. Surrounded by those who make it their business to study their infirmities, to pander to their passions, to offer incense to their vanity, and to devise apologies for their crimes, they are led blindfolded into sin and ruin. Had there been one honest man in the court bold enough to tell Herod that he had slain a man more righteous than himself, the blush of shame would have dyed the brow of the tyrant, and Herod might have paused in his evil career.

And now to conclude these reflections upon the atrocious deed which Herod committed upon the apostle, whom he slew with the sword. Who can review the history of this dark and tragic scene, without feeling the emotion of gratitude to God rising in his heart? We live in sheltered circumstances in a happy period. We have not to complain of persecution for the sake of Christ. We can sit every man under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to interrupt our religious repose. We can follow the convictions and preferences of our own consciences, no one forbidding us. Let us, however, not forget, that in due proportion to our

mercies are our obligations to improvement. We are favored with the scriptures, with the sanctuary, with the Sabbath, with the ordinances of religion, and the means of grace; and it will be better in the day of judgment with Sodom and Gomorrah, than with us, if we slight our privileges.

J. A. WYLIE, M.A.

THE REVEALING PROCESS.

Luke xii. 2.—“*For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed: neither hid, that shall not be known.*”

THESE words formed a proverbial saying among the Jews. Once the Saviour used them to encourage the disciples, when their instructions were despised and their principles rejected. “Fear not,” He says; “that which is whispered in secret, shall be proclaimed upon the house top.” The religion you preach shall spread and triumph, though now trodden under foot, and hiding in the caves; and though now persecuted and calumniated, your purposes and principles shall at last be vindicated before the universe.

Another time when He used the words, is that referred to in the text. The Pharisees stood before Him, surrounded by the multitude. They had shewn themselves both deceitful and wicked; they had done great wrong, and knew that they had, and yet claimed to be chosen of their Lord. They endeavoured to hide their real deformity under a fair

exterior, and succeeded so well, that the Saviour said, "They are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them." Then began He to announce the doctrine of a revelation at a future day, when things should appear as they are, and to say unto His disciples, "Beware ye, for there is *nothing covered* that shall not be revealed." Not only does He speak of the developments of the resurrection day, but declares that the most minute secrets of the human heart shall be disclosed. His words are, "There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed; that which is spoken *in the ear in the closet*, shall be proclaimed upon *the house top*." It is, as if He had said—the whole past history of each mind, with all the deeds done in the body, shall at some time be made to pass before itself and the universe; and it is to the illustration and enforcement of this idea that we now ask your attention. We therefore remark.

I. There are revealing processes going on *in the world around us*. Events are ordered by Providence in this life, as if they were designed to bring hidden things to light. One fact often discloses a great deal when brought into connection with another fact, which, when it stood by itself, told nothing. Some circumstance, in itself unimportant, and having but little connection with the main issue, has been the means of revealing that, which though searched for with diligence, had been concealed for years.

For a long period the sin of the brethren of Joseph in selling him to the Egyptians, had been covered over; none doubted their story—all thought him dead—even his father mourned for him, as for a child whose face he was never to see more. But at length corn was to be bought, for there was a scarcity in Judea, and Egypt was the grain growing country, and they were directed, very naturally, to him who had charge of the provisions under the king, and this man, to their astonishment and confusion, was Joseph, their brother; the deed though done long before, could no longer

be concealed, Joseph must see his father, the story must be told, and the transaction which had long been covered, was at last revealed. The records of our criminal courts are full of evidence to the same point. The mere knife that a father dropped in the forest after he had murdered his friend, recognized twenty years after, by his own child, who was very young at the time, as his father's knife led to the detection and punishment of the criminal, when old and grey headed.

There is, however, one element of the mind which has contributed more than all the rest, to remove, in this world, the covering from deeds of darkness, namely, *the remorse of a guilty and violated conscience*. The deed which brings the criminal to execution, is often but one of a hundred which would never have been revealed in this life but for his own remorseful confessions. It is said that the majority of criminals now confined in our prison houses, and condemned to die, will be found to be there on the testimony of their own words, forced from them by the anguish of a wounded spirit.

II. But whatever may be the case with respect to revelations of guilt in this world, on the day of judgment the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Obstacles, which in this life prevented a full disclosure of the deeds done in the body, will, in the next, be wholly removed; and all the processes which contribute to development, will have full and unimpeded play. The body will be removed. It is a well known fact, that in this life the action of the mind is hindered by reason of its connection with its corporeal investiture. The soul is incarcerated, and often crippled by its dependance upon the body.

But in the eternal world, the corporeal hindrances will be all removed—the ponderous envelope will be wholly shaken off; that which was insensible and dormant by reason of its earthly tabernacle, will quiver then with an intense and terrific life; and every faculty of the mind

which had been hindered and clouded, will contribute of its treasures and strength to consummate the stupendous purposes of God. Forgetfulness will be removed. Memory will then give up its dead. What had been buried and forgotten will rise again into view in multitudinous and condemnatory array; as the history of a past life, with all its painful and oblivious scenes, sometimes forces its way into the minds of dying men, with a terrible and avenging clearness, and will not let them rest; so we have every reason to believe that when the body is all removed, and sickness interposes no restraints, the mind will recall, with fearful distinctness, its minutest and most forgotten deeds, and all that was here scattered through a life, will then be collected into one single and burning point of time.

All lost evidence will be supplied. In this world not only are important facts kept out of sight by the death or absence of witnesses, but after the transaction has long gone bye, something often transpires, which, had it appeared at the time, would have changed the whole face and issue of the case. But in the world to come no witnesses will be absent; all that can be gathered will be there, and all that bears upon the case will be concentrated and arranged into one connected line of light and fire. The evidence will all be there, and close at hand. All diverting associations will be removed; the green earth will have passed away—the mild skies will have been folded up—the faces which spoke of pity for the criminal to the last, will not be there—the voices of men will have ceased—the hopes and passions of time will have come to an end; none of those passing incidents which broke for a moment the train of condemnatory thought in this life, will be found in the world to come; the mind will have full and unimpeded action upon itself; reflection will not be broken in upon; conscience will not be diverted from its true path; withal, one thing will be visible there, which was not seen here—that eye which saw the deeds of darkness, though itself unseen,

will there gleam upon the offender face to face; over all the vast assembly will be seen an awful splendour, that rebuking or approving presence, which in this world, no man can look upon and live.

Finally, to apply this subject, we find matter for anxious reflection to the wicked. It furnishes matter for great solicitude to one who has never repented. The sins which he has committed, unless confessed and forgiven, must come out and be displayed, and in the most painful and humiliating form. There is every reason to believe that in the day of revelation he will be his own accuser. Not on the testimony of angels, not by the witnessing of saints are we told he will be confounded, but, standing trembling before the judgment bar and the assembled universe, he will stammer out his own sad and guilty story of deep transgression; out of his own mouth will he be condemned; and if he should attempt to conceal anything, the terrible harvest of avenging retribution will reveal the rest. Just as on earth, there are diseases and punishments, natural and judicial, which, whilst they avenge, reveal the sin; just as the inebriate's trembling limbs, and sometimes the maniac's frenzied words indicate the cause of all their misery, so in the endless moral harvests beyond the grave have we reason to believe, that so strict will be the correspondence between the avenging consequences and the guilty deeds, that the one will reveal the other.

Now, in view of this awful day, what will you do, my impenitent friend? You have sinned; it will be known in all its minuteness and all its extent, and to every eye; what will you do? What can you do, but confess your guilt to God here on earth. Perhaps the thoughts of thine heart may be forgiven thee. They must be told at some time; for every secret thing you must give account; why, then is it not madness to defer the confession and renunciation until it is dragged forth before the universe? Now you may whisper it in silence into the ear of Him who is

mighty to save ; who has said to the penitent, "your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more." If it were possible to find some place where God is not ; if it were possible for the unforgiven to elude the eye of the Omniscient, it would still not be wise to do it, so long as conscience lives to upbraid and torment ; the darkness which would hide you from the Searcher of hearts, would not hide you from your own soul ; but when we know that if we ascend into the heavens God is there, and if we descend into the deep He is still there, that His eye seeth through the thick cloud, and the darkness and the light are alike open to His view. Oh, what folly to defer repentance until it shall be too late.

This doctrine, like all laws that are necessary and universal, is not without its consolation to the righteous. His good acts will not be forgotten. God has treasured them up, and will bring them forth. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward. If you have to say, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee ? or sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? Verily, inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these His brethren, ye have done it unto Him.

H. NEILL.

SORROW AND JOY.

James v. 13.—*“Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing Psalms.”*

MUCH of the experience, which is also intended to be the discipline of life, is divided between its sorrows and its joys. It is the counsel of the apostle James, that the sentiments and principles of religion should be present with their holy influences in both of these conditions. He would have us sanctify our troubles, and our pleasures, by thoughts of Him who appoints them. Whether the heart be depressed by grief, or elated by gladness, let it be placed under the wise care of piety, so that it may be neither sunk too low, nor raised too high, but always kept within the sphere of duty, and near unto God. It must be so instructed, that it may pour out its fulness in supplication, or in praise, and not suffer the wealth of its deep fountains to run to waste.

How then is it with us in those two opposite conditions of existence to which our text refers? How is it with our own souls, when they are overwhelmed by sorrow, and when they are illumined by joy? To which class do we belong? to those who regard, or those who disregard the counsel of the apostle?

To consider, first, the condition which is first mentioned in the text, how is it with our souls in sorrow? How are they affected? How do they demean themselves? Where do they look? What is their language? When we are afflicted do we pray? Do we go for comfort to the Comforter? Do we lay the burden of our woes at the feet of our Father? Do we sympathize with the spirit of the

psalmist, when he says, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my soul trusteth in thee; and under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge, until this calamity be overpast?"

Do we regard adversities as the sober angels of God, sent from Him, and leading to Him; or, on the other hand, as if affliction came forth from the ground, do we rest our regards upon the ground, and cast upwards not a glance, not a hope, not the least whispering of a prayer? Are we never brought before the footstool of the Almighty, but by some signal misfortune, some strong and irresistible grief, and only then to cry out in terror, or impatience, and pray to be delivered from trouble, without praying for submission, and strength to bear it? If this is all our prayer, we do not pray. There is no faith, no humility, no resignation in such a cry. It is complaint not prayer. We are among the worldly. We have yet to learn the nature and experience the power of true religion.

Let us for a moment look around us, and observe how sorrows are entertained by the mass of mankind. If they are afflicted, do they pray? Far from it. I do not mean that it is necessary they should pray aloud in affliction, and before men. Nor would such praying, of itself, and unaccompanied by other manifestations, prove that they prayed. But their manners, their language, and conduct show plainly that they do not pray, that the spirit within them does not pray; they do not bow themselves down in humble supplication before him who chastens them. They do not look beyond the mere event, the loss, the disappointment, the pain, the care, or whatever else the immediate occasion of their grief may be. They do not attempt to raise themselves above it. They are the slaves of circumstances. They talk of fate. They murmur at their destiny. They blindly submit to what is inevitable.

One man is irritated by adversity. He takes no pains to conceal his vexation. The gloom of night is under his

brows. He speaks as if he had suffered some injustice. He cannot specify any individual who has wronged him, but conceives himself wronged in some way by the event itself, which causes his affliction; and as he cannot make the event feel any retaliation, he vents his moroseness in the ears, or to the eyes of all who approach him. He is voluble of his vain and wearying complaints, or he chills and darkens the surrounding atmosphere by his stern and forbidding aspect.

Another man does not openly show that he is irritated. He endures misfortune, bereavement, pain. But what endurance! hard, cold, proud, or reckless. What endurance! turning away from thought, ignorant of the ministry of hope, fastened to the cheerless present, holding no converse with the invisible and the future. What endurance! stiffening and cramping, not supporting the soul. It speaks the sufferer's mind as plainly as words could speak. He has a soul, as if he had it not. He has a soul made in the likeness of its Creator, and he seems as unmindful of that divine affinity, as if it had been made by chance.

The way in which joy is received, and appreciated by the multitude, is not in its nature different from their entertainment of sorrow. It shows the same shallowness, the same want of reflection, and hope, and elevation, the same confinement to the present, the same dependence on circumstances. The joy of one will be noisy and boisterous, while that of another will run in a gentler, though not a deeper stream. Both are derived from casual sources, flow but a short distance, and are soon dried up. There is enough of mirth among men, but very little pious mirth. The spirit which is not made glad by the mercies of God, singeth no psalms to His praise, and giveth no glory to His name. It heedeth not the psalmist's injunction, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." It was never mindful of those benefits, and therefore cannot even forget them. Its music hath no rich chords of grateful feeling,

but is light and fugitive ; a song of earth transient as dew, but not like the dew rising to heaven, there is no heart in such joy.

But who is he in whose heart the principles of religion have been carefully, tenderly fostered, and on whose conduct and life they exercise their proper energies, and to whose character they yield their natural fruits ? We may know him by his deportment in the day of tribulation and anguish, and in the day of prosperity and rejoicing ; and if we can see in our own deportment any good corresponding to his, we have a fair ground for concluding that our hearts and lives are regulated by the same influences, that we have some true knowledge of religion, some practical experience of its supporting and sanctifying power.

How soft is his sorrow, and how it softens without distressing others !

And how harmless, how childlike, how grateful is his joy. How careful is he not to let it run to riot, and spend itself in vain dissipation. The song of his gladness is a psalm of gratitude, the echoes of which may be heard from every object around him. He sympathizes with all the innocent joy on the earth, but he remembers that all this joy has a source ; and as before in sorrow, so now in delight, he looks beyond earth and earthly things. He regarded affliction as sent, and he prayed and was resigned. He regards his happiness as given, and he is grateful, and seeks to impart of his abundance, and make others happy, and cheerful and grateful.

Is this the manner in which we receive the impressions of sorrow or joy ? Are we free from temporal bonds and the authority of passing things ? Is it our custom to rise above the shadows of earth into the light of heaven ? Do we get out from the thralldom of mere events, and regard what is beyond and above these events ? In these two great conditions of life, the sad and the joyful conditions, do we acknowledge a Supreme disposer, and connect

ourselves with Him, and feel and act as under his disposal ? If so, then we are not strangers to religion. We are in the right way, the way of life, and without doubt or mistrust, should use the best of our diligence to press onward in the same. Doubt and mistrust belong only to those, who have not made religion their own, by a practical and close application of its principles to the conditions of their life. They may have professed religion, and may have thought, with entire sincerity, that religion was no stranger to them. But they have not made it their own, unless they have experienced its instructing and sustaining power ; unless it has taught them to pray and to sing. It really abides with those alone, within whom it effectually works. They who have experienced its help and operation within them, cannot doubt of its presence, and cannot mistrust its character. It is not with them a matter of profession only, but of conviction. They do not doubt, because they know. They are not distracted between this and that opinion or form, but they go on in the path which they have felt to be that of truth and salvation, because in it they have met with strength, and health, and joy. They do not stop or hesitate, but they go steadfastly onwards, praying always in the spirit and making melody in their hearts unto God.

F. W. P. GREENWOOD, D.D.

THE NATURE AND REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

I. Peter, iii. 15.—“*Be ready always to give answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*”

TRUE Christians have a *hope* of salvation, and they have a *reason* for that hope. Let us enquire, then,

I. What is the Christian's hope?

II. What is the *reason* for that hope?

I. What is the Christian's hope?

Hope is the desire of some attainment, attended with expectation or conviction that the object of desire is attainable. It is, therefore, an operation of the mind, which involves the action of reason and judgment. It is a mental state in contrast to despair, where all expectation of success is extinguished. This is a general definition of hope, and thus far all hope is the same. But the *Christian's* hope is distinguished from all other by its *object* and *end*.

The *object* of the Christian's hope is *heaven*, as a state of holiness and communion with God. The Christian hopes that he shall dwell in heaven, that he shall be sinless, that he shall put off this flesh, with all temptations to sin, and shall live and reign with Christ in glory. The object of the Christian's hope, then, is, holiness as a personal grace, and the glory of God as the great object of all pious desire and effort. The *end* or effect of this hope is the commencement, gradual progress, and vigorous growth of this personal holiness in the present life, and its perfection in heaven, to the glory of God in Jesus Christ, through whose work and intercession this end is accomplished. This is the Christian's hope, in its *nature*, *object*, and *end*. It is in the heart a

desire for holiness, with an expectation of obtaining it. This hope, then, belongs, in its nature, object, and end, to every Christian. It must, therefore, be attended with a personal experience, which furnishes him with a *reason* for his hope.

II. What, then, is the *reason* of the Christian's hope? *Three specifications* will develop a personal experience, not only amply sufficient to justify this hope, but, by a very natural and almost necessary process, originating and sustaining it.

1. He has felt himself to be a *lost sinner*. Christ came to seek and save them that were *lost*. Not against their *will*, but by their own consent, in full view of their actual situation. Therefore, in this plan we see that provision is made for correcting and enlightening the mind, so that it may be led to an intelligent choice. By a divine agency, the mind is enlightened to apprehend sin in its true nature and consequences, and to see clearly the most important and solemn relations of the sinner to God as a lawgiver. Here the soul comes to the knowledge and conviction that it is *lost*—not as a matter of speculation, but of reality.

Did you ever feel that you are lost? Do you know the gloominess, anxiety, perplexity, terror, consternation, and amazement of being bewildered in a trackless wood? Have you, in that state of agitation, seen the night shut in, the stars expire, the heavens blackened with clouds, as if hung for your funeral? Have you felt the chill of the midnight air come over you, and caught no answer to your anxious call for help? Have you heard the yell of the wild beast, sniffing the scent of your track, and the tread of his rapid steps hastening to his prey? Have you *ever felt*, under any circumstances, the conviction in full possession of your souls that you were *lost*? Then, in that conviction, you have had an illustration of the experience of the sinner brought to a knowledge of his true situation under the law. Whatever may have been your precise condition, the opera-

tions of the mind in this part of its experience are the same, the effects on the feelings and efforts are the same, all is the same, except the intelligent conviction of the different consequences which follow in the one case and in the other. It is a sense of personal danger, awakening fear, urging to effort, and sometimes ending in despair.

If I could open to your view the dark caverns of hell, and shew you the spirits of sinners there, brought to the solemn reality of their moral ruin, this one idea would stand out on its walls, and speak in every form and feature of its miserable tenants, *Lost ! lost ! lost !* This is the first real conviction of the sinner under the law. And until he is brought to this reality, he will never make an effort to any effect. We may brandish the sword of the Spirit, naked and polished, but he will wink away the face of its brightness, and say, *Surely it is the hand of a man.* We may sound in his ear that terrible idea in that most awful word, *Lost ! lost ! lost !* until he trembles. But he will soon recover his equanimity, and say, *Surely it is the voice of a man.* Never will he do anything in earnest until he is convinced, by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that *he is lost.* This, therefore, is a necessary part of the experience of a true Christian, and it is the first step in his way to hope.

2. He feels that he has fled to Christ for salvation. Suppose yourself, if you can, in the place of the lost traveller in a trackless desert, where your calls for help should be answered only by the tiger's yell. Suppose, when you were expecting to feel that tiger's leap, an accent of mercy should revive your hope of salvation, and the warm hand of a fellow-man should embrace you, and invite you to flee the impending dangers. You would return that embrace ; you would commit yourself to that man with full confidence, that under *such* circumstances he was true and sincere. Your heart would flow with gratitude, and you would hail and love him as your benefactor. Such is Christ

to the lost sinner. He is a Saviour, and is embraced, and loved, and honored as such. When the sinner comes to a knowledge of his hopeless ruin under the law, then the salvation of the gospel is approved as precisely adapted to his case. He can then believe, he trusts, and in the exercise of that trust, ripened by a divine influence to a sanctifying *faith*, Christ becomes to him the end of the law for righteousness. He is saved by Christ.

3. The true Christian finds a third reason to encourage a hope that he is personally interested in the gospel plan of salvation, in the *effects of this faith on his life*. By a divine constitution, true faith in Christ is made to work by love, to purify the heart, and to bring forth good fruits. This is not a mere contingent circumstance of faith ; *it is a part of gospel faith*, of the faith of the true Christian, and is the characteristic which distinguishes him from the devils and from wicked men. It is operative. It produces infallibly in the soul, certain affections which are the abiding principles of its action. Here, then, the duty of self-examination will find its principal materials for thought. Without a reformed life, proceeding from the love of holiness, every other evidence of Christian character is invalidated. Here must be hatred of *sin*, which will lead to its abhorrence in every form ; and a love of holiness, as such, will ensure the uniform and unwavering pursuit of it. Hence there will result an untiring effort to avoid temptation, and to live in communion with God. Here must be also an abiding love to Christians as such, and to all the precious interests of the church on earth. Here must be a supreme love to God, and devotion of all we have and are to Him. Here are principles which are operative, and adequate to reform the life and fit the soul for heaven.

The man who will perform religious duty only through respect to public sentiment, to preserve his character, is entirely a worldly man. He who finds a relish in the pleasures and company of worldly men, which leads him to

conform to their fashions and practices so far as he can without losing his standing in the church, is at heart a worldly man. He who, to save appearances, will abstain from indulgences in public, which he will cherish with warm and hearty gust in private, is strictly a sensual man. He who will not habitually bear himself in his own presence, and in the presence of God, with the same uprightness as before men—who does not fear the upbraiding of his own conscience more than the public brand—who is not an honest man in his own heart—is a heartless man; and if he be in the church, he is a heartless hypocrite. Thus the *reason* for the *personal hope* which the Christian entertains, is here comprised in three particulars. He has known himself to be lost, has fled to Christ for salvation, and has actually found that a change of heart has resulted in a reformation of life.

Brethren, have you *this hope*? Search and see.

R. W. BAILEY.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF CHRIST.

Isaiah xlii. 4.—“*He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law.*”

THE Evangelist St. Matthew applies this prophecy to Jesus Christ. It is a revelation of His tenderness and constancy in His mediatorial work. Perseverance is a high virtue. We admire it even apart from its object. When exhibited in a good cause, it indicates the deep conviction which the individual has of its importance, the

sincerity of his principles, and the fidelity of his purpose. There are many noble examples of this virtue among men. Scholars have displayed it in the prosecution of their studies. Philosophers have evinced it in their search for wisdom. Warriors have shewn it in the face of deadly danger. The traveller has developed it in his determination to overcome the obstacles and conquer the difficulties of an untrodden path. These, and many others, have persevered till they have won a victory, and carried their enterprize. But illustrious as their example is, it is eclipsed by the perseverance of the Son of God. Of Him the Eternal Father says, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." He shall proceed in his hallowed work of mercy with unbroken constancy, and with unwearied kindness, till He has achieved the object of His mission, and brought His benevolent enterprize to a successful and triumphant conclusion.

The text leads our thoughts to the work in which the Saviour is engaged, the discouragements that rise up before Him, and the victory that will eventually crown His cause. In merit, and power, and wisdom, and love, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth ; and the isles shall wait for His law."

I. Let us consider the work in which the Redeemer is engaged. It is described as "setting judgment in the earth." The expression denotes the benevolence and rectitude of His undertaking. It is no selfish work—no attempt to over-reach and destroy His enemies. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through Him might be saved." Not a single act of resentment or vindictiveness did He ever commit. But He saw that the laws of God had been set aside in this earth ; trampled upon by the very beings for whose protection they were designed. He saw that man had risen up against his fellow-man ; that war and blood had followed in the train of angry passion ; that pride, selfishness, and ungodly ambition had extinguished the humility, love, and brother-

hood that should prevail in every heart and home; and He came to correct these flagrant evils, and restore the world to purity and peace. "To set judgment in the earth," and give His righteous law to the isles of the sea, therefore, was His great and glorious work. The darkness which hung like the night of Egypt over the earth, was to be dispersed, man's attention to his inner nature to be awakened, his thoughtfulness of God to be raised to a habit, godly sorrow for sin to be wrought in his heart, faith to supersede infidelity. Sin in all its guilt to be pardoned, the soul dead to God and truth to be brought to life—polluted, to be cleansed from its innate impurity and evil. This for the individual.

For society—the power and purity of a Christian civilization were to be extended to the remotest ends of the earth. A higher, holier life was to be poured through the social system. War, aggression, and injustice of every form to be superseded by goodwill to men. The universal brotherhood of humanity to become an acknowledged fact. Jehovah enthroned in the hearts of men, to be recognized and adored as the Sovereign of the world, and the earth to be "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

This is the work in which the Son of God is engaged. This is the righteous judgment which He will set in the earth. Righteous in view of the wants and woes, the bliss and the destiny of the race. Righteous do I say? It is more. It is benevolent, godlike, divine. It is gracious in every principle it involves, in every impulse it gives to human thought and feeling, and glorious in every issue revealed to sense, or consciousness, or faith.

II. The text intimates, that discouragements rise up before Him in this career of kindness and mercy. The assurance that He will not fail nor be discouraged implies, that He will meet with much to discourage Him, that His work will be inconceivably difficult and painful. And this was verified all through His personal residence on earth.

In what a state did He find the world ! His own people were involved in such pride and earthliness, that, although His advent had been amongst them the subject of prophecy during many hundred years, yet, when at length He visited them, they scorned His instructions and resisted His claims. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And then the Gentiles—how sad their moral condition ! They were lying in darkness and in the shadow of death, "without hope, and without God in the world." What a people to visit ! What a race to reclaim ! What a work to accomplish !

Sin, of course, in all its forms, stands opposed to the missionary enterprise on which the Saviour has entered, and which He will most assuredly prosecute to victory. Man is earthly in the bent of his inclinations. To material objects, far more than to those that are spiritual, he looks for the relief of his woes, and the gratification of his desires. The "things that are seen" more powerfully charm and attract him, than "the things that are not seen." The acquisition of treasure here occupies much more of his attention than the laying up of treasure in heaven. What he shall eat and drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed, absorb him so completely, that he has little leisure and less inclination to seek the meat that endureth unto everlasting life. This view of man is peculiar to no age or land. From as far back as his history goes, like the needle to the pole, he turns to worldly pursuits, which absorb his sensibilities, and engross his heart. The Saviour has met him at every step, in His persevering efforts to "set judgment in the earth." Hard, indeed, is the struggle by which this earthliness of the soul is overcome ! Ever and anon it rallies to the conflict ; and after all the triumphs which the Redeemer, "travelling in the greatness of His strength, and mighty to save," has won, the strength of this fallen element of our moral nature is amazing still. For one who, in thought, in action, in feeling, claims affinity with the skies, we may

meet with thousands who are linked to the earth. Amongst the millions of our race by whom moments are spent in spiritual employments, ages are devoted to secular concerns. The perseverance of Christ is against all this, and still He is "not discouraged."

Selfishness, a cold individualism, presents itself likewise in opposition to the benevolent purposes of the Redeemer. Under the action of sin, the selfish element has risen above the social and the spiritual. The individual has reached an importance in his own estimation far above his race. How will an act or scheme affect *me*? is the great question with him; not how it will affect the world. If God commands us to feed the hungry, to educate the ignorant, to send the gospel to the heathen, to give the Bible to the world, and to dispense the water of life to the parched lips of the dying pagan; the sufferer must bear his anguish, and the messenger of salvation must delay his errand of mercy until it can be ascertained how it will affect the comforts, the luxuries, the humour of the *individual*. Alas! how frequently the merest suspicion of danger will give the negative to the most importunate demands of human wretchedness! And though sinners are dying by thousands, and though the voice of Infinite Love is calling, in tones of melting compassion, for help to rescue a world of perishing souls, the most capricious demands of the *individual* must have the preference. The world must move on to perdition, until it is perfectly compatible with the temporal interests—the personal convenience—the imagined honour of the individual, to send forth the words by which it might be saved!

Let any man, if he can, repel this degrading charge. Let him prove the aspersion false: he shall have our gratitude. But he cannot. His search for vindicating facts will shew him man taxing man and beast, water, earth, and air, for selfish purposes and personal gratification. But against all this the Saviour perseveres. The salvation of the world

must be achieved, though it be done in detail—the Son of God will not fail. He counted the cost ere He engaged in the work, and He will pursue it till He brings forth judgment unto victory.

III. This is our third and last particular. Grace will ultimately triumph. The assurance of this fact rests not on a single passage or promise of scripture. It runs like a refreshing stream through all the field of prophecy. There shall be the triumph of the *moral* over the *physical*. “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.” There shall be the triumph of the *real* over the *ideal*. “Righteousness and faithfulness shall be the girdle of the Saviour.” The dominion of the earthly must come to an end, and the ascendancy of the spiritual be complete. The fictions of sin and infidelity must disappear before Him. There shall be the triumph of the *social* over the *selfish*. Beasts of prey and poisonous reptiles are described as losing their ferocity and venom, and mingling with each other in harmony and innocence. These are symbolic of the change that shall be wrought in the passions and propensities of man, when the Redeemer shall set judgment in the earth. And there shall be the triumph of the *true* over the *false*. “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord—all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest.” The knowledge of the Lord is the soul of truth, the sum of philosophy, the essence of wisdom. And when the earth is filled with this moral element, there will be the universal prevalence of truth and holiness. The knowledge of God is not like human knowledge. It sanctifies the heart, as well as enlightens the mind. “This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

Great indeed will be the results of these mighty changes. In every part of the world, love, perfect love, will fill every heart, beam from every eye, break from every tongue. Not

a breast, through all the human population of the globe, but shall be moved by the same rich, overflowing benevolence, that gushes from the heart of the Saviour. What relief from the evils that now crush the enfeebled spirit—from the dismal night of infidelity—from the cruel injustice that wrongs our fellow-men—from the fell impurities that invade the sacredness of virtue—from the fearful oaths and blasphemies that break upon our ears! What purity in the church in that bright day—what holy spirituality—what unity and power—what growth in grace—what songs of joy!

Let us take encouragement from the Saviour's example. We are soon weary under the burdens of life: soon disheartened when we see how hard a world this is to save. But it will silence every doubt, rouse every languid feeling, and stimulate us to imitate the perseverance of our Lord, when we read that, in due time, the shout of victory will resound all the world over.

J. T. PECK, D.D.

TEKEL.



Daniel v. 27.—“*Tekel, thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.*”



JOB observes, that “the triumphing of the wicked is short.” This remark was signally verified in the narrative connected with the text. Belshazzar, the monarch of Chaldea, was indulging in sinful and intemperate merriment, accompanied with profane contempt of the God of Israel. While employ-

ing the vessels, which he had plundered from Jehovah's temple, in appropriation to the honour of his idols and the sensuality of his guests, a mysterious hand appeared inscribing on the wall of his palace the ominous sentence which was translated by Daniel, and a part of whose import is given in our text. This portion of the inscription described his character, and another his doom ; and "in that night," says the sacred historian, "was king Belshazzar slain."

But my hearers, there are balances in which we must all be weighed ; and if, when the scales are suspended and that scrutiny takes place, *Tekel*, as in the case of the impious monarch, should be inscribed on all our pretensions and stamped on all the claims we advance, how sad ! God, we are assured, "has appointed a day, in which he *will* judge the world in righteousness ;" and as through that ordeal each one of us must pass, it is the dictate of wisdom to ascertain, if practicable, by anticipation, what our situation is likely to be, when "time" to us shall be no longer. The great inquiry then, arising from the text, in application to ourselves, and to others for whom we feel concern, or in whom we take interest, is, on what individuals is this sentence likely to be pronounced, "in the day of our Lord's appearing" who will then be found wanting ? and "who shall be able to stand ?" It cannot admit of question, that radically defective in character will be found all the openly *immoral*, whether their immorality be confined to the breast of one, or extend to the violation of more, or of all the commands of the decalogue. But it can hardly be necessary to say much, to prove, that in all the openly vicious, there is a radical failure of the character necessary for heaven. This point very few will have the hardihood to contest.

But as a general remark, which we shall establish and corroborate by several particular details, it must be asserted that all *unrenewed, unregenerate persons*, who have not "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new, which

is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"—all who have not in the language of the Bible, "passed from death unto life," are by Him who is to decide the fates of men, pronounced unfit for the abodes of heavenly bliss.

I. Let us place in the balances the *mere moralist*, and bring *his* pretensions to the test. Some consider the whole of religion as consisting "in the duty which God requires of man" as contained in the performances and virtues which are ordinarily comprehended under the common phrase, morality; whether the term embraces only those attributes of human character which consist in giving to every one his equitable *due*, or extends to those exercises of benevolence and charity, which form the constituents of distinguished philanthropy; whether simply the righteous man, "for whom," as Paul expresses it, "one will *scarcely* die," or, "the good man, for whom some *would* dare to die." All pretensions beyond these are regarded by the class to whom we now allude, as hypocritical, ostentatious, unnecessary, or fanatical. But let us weigh in the balances of the sanctuary, the claims of the moralist in the narrower or broader signification of the term. To what will these claims amount? It will be seen on examination, that these matters which are considered as the *whole*, or at least as the *principal part* of duty, are regarded in but a *secondary* and subordinate light, by Him who holds in His hands the scales of divine justice, and truly estimates the weight and worth of whatever is placed in them. "Thou shalt *love the Lord thy God* with all thine heart," He asserts to be "the first and great commandment." To that of loving our neighbour as ourselves, he assigns only a *secondary* place, calling it "the second commandment," and observing concerning it that it is "like unto the first." What then, if weighed in the balances, is to become of the man who lays it down as a principle, and acts upon it as the maxim of his life, that there is no religion and no divine requirement, beyond feeling and performing justice and mercy to our fellow men? When the law of

God is thrown into one scale, and such a man deposited in the other, must not *Tekel* be inscribed on all his pretensions, on all his attainments, on all his expectations ?

II. Another candidate for heaven is the religious *formalist*. He tells us that he is punctiliously religious—his prayers and his alms—his church and his closet, the baptismal font and the sacramental table, all testify to the fairness and fullness of his claims to “sit in heavenly places.” But Jehovah long ago weighed characters of this description and pronounced them wanting. Heartless forms, without heartfelt experience, will not answer. He had a people, who, in the days of Jeremiah, exclaimed with no small confidence, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” To this people then, before and afterwards, thus “trusting in man and making flesh their arm,” thus “sacrificing to their own net and burning incense to their own drag,” he had occasion to say in the language of reproof and rebuke, by *one* prophet, “rend your heart and not your garments ;” by *another*, “to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? Bring no more vain oblations ; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth ; they are a trouble to me : I am weary to bear them.” And “God manifest in the flesh,” when on earth, found the posterity of the same people bolstering their frail and fallacious hopes upon a similar plea. “We have Abraham to our Father,” whose mouth he stopped, and whose vanity he suppressed by adding, “God is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Thus too, boasted the Laodicean Church, in reference to her fair but superficial exterior. “I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” And with similar fidelity, the Searcher of hearts prostrated her pride, by the allegation, “thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked, and ignorant for thou knowest it not.” Thus must all who have “a form of godliness,” but “deny” or dislike “the power,” expect, when “weighed in the balances” to be “found wanting.”

III. That large class in the third place, who call themselves, the *sincere*, the candid, and the charitable. Give me but the fact, says the individual ranged under this classification, that my neighbour is sincere in his belief, and I ask no more. I enquire not what that belief is, I am satisfied he is on the road to heaven. God is *pleased* with the great variety of worship that his creatures pay him, whether under the denomination of Jehovah, Jove, or Lord. If the *pagan* mother be sincere in the sacrifice, let her give her first born to the jaws of the fishes of prey—the fruit of her body to the waters of the Ganges. If the *Jew* be sincere, let him rave at the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians adore, leave his Bible unexplored, and sit at the feet of the Rabbi. If the *Papist* be sincere, let him close his eyes and ears to the scriptures, and submit both his understanding and conscience to priestly domination and control, unbar the door of the Inquisition and expose heretics to its fury. If the *Protestant* be sincere, let one say, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.” Let another give glory only to the Father, dethrone the Son, and make a mere attribute of the Holy Ghost. The wings of this man’s charity are sufficiently broad and strong to waft them all to heaven.

But if sincerity be all that is necessary to render a man’s religion right, how ridiculous a part was acted by Saul of Tarsus, in exchanging his Judaism for Christianity. If he could honestly say, “I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” why did he not go on to “waste the Church of Christ?” Why should he exchange the feet of Gamaliel for the feet of Jesus?—the temple of Jerusalem for the Jail of Philippi—the countenance of the priesthood for their menaces and frowns—the honors, emoluments, and prospects which belonged to him as an Hebrew of the Hebrews, for the prisons and deaths which awaited him as a Christian? Why sacrifice a name unblemished, and a reputation untarnished among

his own people, to be regarded and treated as "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things?"

And now it may be that some are ready to ask, "who then can be saved?" If all are to be weighed in the scales of divine justice, and found wanting, where shall we all appear? My brethren, there is one character—only one that will be able to meet the ordeal. That person is the evangelical believer, he who besides exercising "repentance towards God," also exhibits "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." How ample and various are the testimonies on this point. Among them the following constitute but a few. "He that believeth shall be saved." "Whosoever believeth on Him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." But what is faith? That question is most important. Faith, as it relates to all other subjects, is an affair of the head alone; but as it relates to the religion of the gospel, the religion that issues in salvation, it involves the heart also. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Saving faith implies *trust* in the merits and *love* to the character of Christ, as well as belief of His records. It cries, "Lord save me or I perish,"—it "rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh." It throws around the sinner the robe of *his* righteousness, having first torn away and displaced the "filthy rags" of *his own*. It carries the sinner into "the city of refuge," safe from "the avenger of blood." Thus it furnishes the penitent with a complete discharge, thus, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, dear hearers, with the law and the testimony in your hands, the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death, and the testimony of Jesus by whom came grace and truth, ascertain where your spiritual posture is; and if *Tekel* is the inscription on your character, let it be effaced at once—let it be commuted for the inscription "accepted in the Beloved." And may God give you grace to flee from the wrath to come. Amen. B. M. PALMER, D.D.

RELIGIOUS DECISION.

Psalm lvii, 7.—“*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.*”

SUCH was the impassioned exclamation of David, and it should be the language of every regenerated soul. No one professing to be on the Lord's side, should give occasion to doubt whether he is there; or leave the matter questionable whether he has a divided heart. Having clearly apprehended his duty, he should come to a firm and unshaken resolution to do it. On this point there should be no hesitancy: it should be settled for ever. Adopting the exclamation of the Psalmist as the sentiment of his heart, he should say, “my heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.”

Religious decision is our subject; and we will present it under two enquiries; first as it regards David, and secondly as it regards ourselves.

I. On what was David's heart fixed? We answer,

1. *On God and his service.* He says in one of his Psalms, “thou art my portion, O Lord: I have hoped in thy word. Oh! how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day.” Two distinct objects of choice are presented to mankind—the Creator, and the world. To one or the other of these the heart is freely given. To both it cannot be. There is but one throne in the heart; and the Most High and the world cannot both occupy it. In common with his fallen race, David naturally chose the world at first; but when renewed by the influence of the Divine Spirit, he transferred his supreme affections to Jehovah. Submitting himself to God, he took the attitude of a willing and dutiful child, and consecrated his service, his love, and his example to Him. He took Him for his refuge and rest. “At what time I am

afraid, I will trust in thee," was the holy and confiding determination of his soul.

2. His heart was also fixed on the diligent study of the *lively oracles of God*. To that portion of it which was then complete and known, he was ardently attached: it was his meditation all the day. He drank deeply of this sacred fountain, and drew copiously from its celestial waters. In the page of Inspiration he found a charm which no other page presented. It was a light unto his feet, and a lamp unto his path. Its statutes were his songs in the house of his pilgrimage. Its testimonies were the joy and rejoicing of his heart. Its instructions were his guide in perplexity. Its promises his consolation in sorrow. Its precepts his safeguard in danger. Honey is sweet; but the law of God was sweeter to his taste than honey and the honey comb. Gold is precious; but in his estimation the words of God were more precious than gold, yea, than much fine gold. By them was he warned against temptation, and in keeping of them he found great reward; so keen was his desire for the truth, and so firmly was his heart fixed upon the oracles of God.

3. His heart was also fixed on the *duty of prayer*. He prized it as a privilege, and to the throne of grace he was no stranger. Often did he supplicate the Divine Spirit to pour the light of truth, of comfort, of wisdom, of purity, into the dark chambers of his mind. There too, in secret communion with God, on bended knee, he frankly confessed his guilt, sought its removal by faith in the promised sacrifice of the Redeemer, and threw himself upon the pardoning mercy of a gracious God. He resolved, that amidst all the weighty cares of royal government, and the distractions of the court, "morning, evening, and at noon will I call upon thee," nay, "seven times a day will I pray unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments." When beset with temptations, oppressed by perplexity, and visited with trials of no ordinary weight, he would carry his case to the footstool of the Almighty, and there cast his burden on the Lord.

4. And his heart was fixed, in every possible way, upon the grand purpose of *furthering the interests of Zion*. To promote and diffuse the testimonies of God, and disseminate the knowledge of his word, was his unwearied study. As he had himself been made a partaker of the grace of God, he fervently prayed and laboured that his subjects might receive it also. He made it no secret that he had espoused the cause of Jehovah, the God of Israel; and he was quite prepared to meet the ridicule of princes and nobles, if it should be cast upon him, for his avowed profession of love to God, and obedience to his will. And although not permitted himself to erect a temple for the service and worship of the Most High, yet it was in his heart to do so, and he closed his mortal course in efforts to collect the materials for his son and successor to raise a peerless edifice to the glory of God.

On such objects was the heart of the Psalmist fixed. In other words, he was decided in religion. He deliberately, prayerfully, and with full purpose of heart, surrendered himself to God, that he might lead the life of a believer, and serve his generation according to the will of God.

II. Why should we do likewise? I answer,

1. Because indecision degrades the character of man. This is the lowest ground, but, as the world goes, it is deserving our notice. There is something unworthy an immortal being in a vacillating mind. There is a common principle in our nature that leads us to disrespect the man who has no judgment of his own, who is blown about by every wind, and turned from his course by every opposing current. This is the case in the common affairs of life; but on the subject of religion, indecision is especially disgraceful. For a man who professes to be on the Lord's side, and engaged in his service, to know not where he actually is—to be drawn now this way and now that—to be oscillating like the pendulum of a time-piece between God and mammon, heaven and the world, is signally

dishonourable. The appeal of the prophet to the halting tribes of Israel, might be most strictly addressed to all persons of this class—"if the Lord be God, serve Him; but if Baal, then serve him."

2. There is no solid and substantial reason *why* the heart should not be fixed on God. The foundation of the Christian is sure. He is not the victim of a cunningly devised fable. There is a God that reigneth in the earth, and He has made known to man his duty and his obligation to its performance. He, by whom all things were made, has travelled on this earth in the form of a servant, that its inhabitants may mount up to companionship with the angels of heaven. The Ancient of Days has been cradled as an infant, that we who are of yesterday may rise to the realms of light and life for evermore. Man has a soul in which infinite treasure is garnered up. It could not be exchanged for the universe, though every planet was gold, and every star a ruby. There is a heaven of exhaustless glory—a hell of intolerable anguish. These are verities as certain as the throne of Deity; realities as vast and as stable as the Creator who formed them.

Nor has the Christian aught to conceal. He has no need to shade the fact, that he loves the greatest and the best of Beings; or that holiness is preferable to sin; or that the service of God is infinitely better than the drudgery of the world; or that safety is to be chosen rather than danger; or that the favour of the Almighty is the noblest inheritance man can have; or that health is preferable to sickness, life to death, heaven to hell. There is nothing in these things, the avowal of which should raise a blush. The moon riding in the heavens—the sun shedding the light and warmth of his meridian glory in the firmament—the stars and comets that traverse the volume of space in the universe of God—have nought to be ashamed of, in doing the Creator's will, and obeying the impress of His laws in their spheres and orbits—and just as little has man cause for shame in his

deliberate, unfeigned, and undissembled devotedness to God.

3. Moreover, the nature of spiritual religion as developed in the gospel, requires and supposes this fixedness of heart. The description of a Christian as to his moral and spiritual feelings, which the scriptures supply, is, that "he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Such a renovation will exhibit itself in the life and conversation. The gospel effectually believed and savingly embraced, will invariably produce decisive effects. No one should be able to mistake the character of the man, who professes to be born again by the Spirit of God. Without practising the austerities of the monk, or the abstinence enjoined, if not observed, upon the disciples of the "men of sin," there should be that subjugation of evil passions, that unbending integrity, that solicitude for the spread of the gospel and the conversion of the world, that regard to the active duties of our respective stations, as will enable all who behold us to read, as in letters of light, the nature and reality of the distinction between the servants of God, and the world that "lieth in wickedness."

4. Again: if we are not thus decided, we shall never accomplish anything truly good and great in the service of God. It is the man of settled views and fixed purposes before whom obstacles, that would be unconquerable to others, give way. The individual who has yielded his heart and energies to the influence of some mighty principle, is sure to triumph. He rarely fails in his enterprize. All his efforts tell. Hence the most signal benefactors of mankind have been remarkable for singleness of aim and decision of purpose. Such was the spirit of Esther, who, moved by the patriotic feelings of humanity, approached Ahasuerus the king, though in danger of her life for the violation of the law of the realm, and presented her petition at the monarch's feet, saying, "if I perish, I perish." Such was Nehemiah, who, exposed to the dagger of the assassin in the discharge of his duty, when advised to secrete himself

in the temple, heroically replied, "should such a man as I flee? And who is there, that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." Such was the magnanimous resolution of the three Hebrew captives, who, when commanded on pain of the burning furnace to bow down before the golden image, undauntedly told the despotic monarch, "our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king; but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image thou hast set up." Such was Daniel, who, when he knew that the imperial edict had gone forth, and the document was written and sealed that consigned him to a den of lions, if, for the space of thirty days, he should make any request to the God of his nation, nevertheless, went to his chamber, and with his windows open towards Jerusalem, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime."

Noble as these instances of decision and religious firmness are, they are, notwithstanding, surpassed by Jesus of Nazareth. His entire life was one unclouded exhibition of unshrinking fidelity to God, and to the object of his mission into the world. "His heart was fixed" truly. He laid His course, and neither Scribes, or Pharisees, or Priests, could drift Him from it. He came to supersede the Jewish ritual, to fulfil the law, to establish a system of spiritual worship, to redeem an apostate world from the curse which its apostasy had incurred, and He prosecuted His errand, in defiance of threats, sufferings, and death. He rebuked sin, humbled the proud, charged guilt home to the rulers, and drove from the temple the covetous traffickers who had made it a den of thieves.

Of the same spirit were the apostles after the day of Pentecost. They braved the prison and the scourge for the sake of their Lord: and hazarded their lives for the truth of the gospel. Such a man was St. Paul, who,

when his friends would have dissuaded him from going to Jerusalem, where bonds and afflictions awaited, declared that he was ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. Such a man was Luther, who, when menaced with persecution, replied, "I will go to Worms, though I should encounter as many devils there, as there are tiles upon the houses." Such a man also was John Knox, whom the tears and beauty of the Scottish Queen Mary could not subdue, nor her denunciations terrify: and over whom, as he lay in his coffin, Morton, the regent, exclaimed, "there lies one who never feared the face of man." And thus the venerable martyr, Eleazar, when tormented, that he might abjure his faith, replied, "prepare your instruments of torture, kindle your flames to a fiercer rage; I stand without fear amidst your frightful engines and implements of martyrdom; I will not violate the laws of my God to save these silver locks." Ah! these noble hearted men, had not "the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The useful Christian is no turnover, no temporizer, no unstable professor. He shews his character. Men see where and what he is. If an action is right, he does it; if wrong, he does it not—he protests against it. Hence the word Protestant, sainted name! Sneer you may, frown you may, threaten you may, he stands immovable; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. And his influence is blessed.

And finally, the decision for which we plead will be a source of no small comfort in the evening of life, and the approach of death. It was matter of holy exultation to the apostle at the end of his course, that he "had kept the faith." When the solemn termination of all our earthly schemes is at hand, it will be painful to reflect on those allurements we never had the courage to resist; while it will, on the other side, be pleasant to feel that by the grace of God, we have followed Him through evil report and good report; and to hear a voice sweeter than that of an

angel, whispering in our ear, "well done, good and faithful servant." "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

In conclusion, I would ask, are your hearts thus fixed? Have you, my brethren, a supreme regard for the will of God? O! that we could all reply, *yes, it is*. If every member of the visible church could say this, what a powerful testimony would be borne to the reality and beauty of religion! Then would "Zion look forth, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." The Lord hasten it in his own time!

JONATHAN BRACE.

THE GAIN OF THE WISE.

Proverbs ix. 12—"If thou be wise, thou art wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

The mere explanation of a proverb is necessarily brief, no matter how large the instruction which may be drawn from it. I apply the present text to the all-absorbing and vitally important matter, evangelical religion. If it be necessary, as a preliminary step, to put the proverb into different language, I would venture this brief paraphrase:—He that is truly wise, will find it to his own personal everlasting advantage; it is his interest as well as his duty to be made wise unto salvation; but he who scorns religion will find his scorning eventually infinitely to his disadvantage. In carrying out this idea, the proverb must be analysed; and this will be one purpose of the present discourse. You

will find the discussion extremely plain and practical, and such as, I trust, by the help of God, may find its way to the consciences of many of my hearers, who, however wise they may be in matters which affect not the salvation of their souls, are far, very far from being wise in that which alone is valuable. My subject will be presented in the following order :—

The decided subjection of the heart to God is the only true wisdom. He who accomplishes this is an infinite gainer. But he who scorns religion and neglects the great salvation of the Gospel is an infinite loser. The last of these particulars I shall reserve for another discourse.

First. I need hardly say to such a congregation as this that an entire subjection of the heart to God is, throughout the whole Scripture, represented as the only true wisdom. It is wisdom in the abstract, thus, “The fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.” It is wisdom contrasted with every other acquisition, “This is life eternal to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

When I speak of religion, brethren, perhaps I may be better understood by saying, that I mean that which is summarily comprehended in the term, faith in Jesus Christ. Religion is a vague term which may be applied to that which is true, that which is false, or that which is formal. I mean by it, that faith in Jesus Christ which is the entire submission of the heart to Him, and a practical devotedness of the life to His service. That belief which takes Jesus Christ as He is set forth in the Scriptures, a Saviour, an all-sufficient, an only atoning, an Almighty Saviour, as “righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” which builds on the only foundation ; and that which embodies the exhortation of the Apostle, “present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, holy, acceptable in his sight” ; that which exemplifies the language of St. Paul, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?” ; that which is connected with the

repentance of the Gospel, and has learned from Christ the import of His declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is true wisdom in the abstract, and, as contrasted with all things else. But the proverb places it before us in another sense ; it is not only understood in the abstract, it is wisdom of a peculiar, personal, individual importance. He that is wise, it wise for himself. The man who gives up his heart to Jesus Christ is an infinite gainer.

Secondly. This may be said to be an unworthy motive. It is a matter of little importance with me what it is, so long as it is the language of Scripture. It is decidedly the language of the text. Mark, my friends, the man, who being truly religious, is not a gainer by it, as by a purchase ; no such thing. If a benefactor offers me a valuable present and I take it, I am a gainer by it, though without purchase. So of religion ; its benefits are the purchase of the blood of Jesus Christ, and by Him freely offered. He who takes them is a gainer, obviously, not by merit, but by grace.

Let us see how then he is wise for himself.

1. The man who truly gives up his heart to God, accepts Jesus Christ as his Saviour, and takes Him for a master, gains the possession of the elements of present happiness. It is a declaration of God Himself, however it may be disputed by the ignorance and perversity of men, "That godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and that which is to come." He who, in his entire subjection to Jesus Christ, acquires a consciousness of reconciliation with an offended God, an interest in that atoning blood which cleanseth from all sin, gains a triumph over the trials, the sufferings, the deprivations, the calamities of this life, and the fear of death, which constitutes a state of ease, which, could it be purchased, would be cheaply purchased by the wealth of worlds. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith." Is there anything in this earth which a rational man, in the

prospect of the many calamities incident to this present state of things, would not give to be able to say, that he had within him a principle which enabled him to rise superior to them all? Who would not sacrifice almost everything to have embodied in his Christian experience the language of the Scriptures,—“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee”? It is written, that “all things shall work together for good to them that love God”; and again, all “things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.” If the possession of a truly religious character does not in its own nature exempt an individual from the calamities of life, it does what is, on the whole, far more effectual, and more elevating to his character, it enables him to bear them. It brings a few clouds to moderate the strong light and the dangerous heat of prosperity; and it sheds the beams of celestial sunshine to enliven the darkest clouds of adversity, which the discipline of God, as a father, may see fit to bring over him.

There is nothing fabled, nothing merely gratuitous in the declaration, that such a principle of religion as Jesus Christ plants in the heart, is the true philosopher's stone, it does substantially turn every thing to gold. He that is wise, then, is wise for himself, even if there were no hereafter in a future world.

2. But secondly, the individual who truly gives his heart to God, and receives the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, and follows Him in the regeneration, is wise for himself, because he gains the prospect of a saved eternity. The truly converted man is the only being on the face of the earth who has a rational hold upon the blessedness of heaven; other men may feed on ashes, and believe a lie; other men may deceive themselves, and be deceived by others; but of all the countless generations of men, the righteous is the only one who has hope in his death. His is a security which is based on no uncertain speculations,

but on the word and the veracity of God. Amidst the ills of life, there may have been many a man willing to exchange the realities of a suffering condition, for what he may deem the uncertainties of another world ; but what in this world is there which is worth so much as the gospel-founded, the grace-implanted ability to say, " I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." " To me to live is Christ, to die is gain." " I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him unto that day." The man then who is wise, is wise for himself, because he gains all that is valuable of time, and he gains a secured hold on the happiness of eternity. " The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." His tower of safety is the munition of rocks.

He is the one represented by our Lord when he says— " Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Such then is the doctrine of the text. How does it affect you ? St. Paul speaks of being " wise unto salvation," are you thus enlightened ? It is possible to be learned without being wise, and to have an extensive knowledge of the scriptures without knowing their power. Search then my brethren, and try your hearts ; and pray God to lead you in the way everlasting.

G. T. BEDELL, D.D.

THE DOOM OF THE SCORNER.

Proverbs ix. 12.—“*But if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.*”

IN a former discourse, I directed your attention to the first part of this verse; it is now my duty to consider the second. The subject is the contrast to that. The man that *receives* the gospel is an infinite gainer; he that *scorns* it is an infinite loser. We have now to illustrate this solemn truth.

To scorn is to despise religion, to scoff at, to ridicule, to reject, to neglect it. He who will not repent is a scorner. He who is not willing to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel is a scorner. He who puts off the concerns of religion is a scorner. He who does not, on the call of God, at once, without disputation and without opposition, submit himself as a lost and ruined sinner to the method of God's mercy in Christ Jesus, is a scorner. He who is self-righteous is a scorner. He who is not ready to say, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” is a scorner. In fine, every careless, unconcerned, impenitent individual, male or female, young or old, who hears the call of God and refuses to obey, comes under the appellation of the scorner of wisdom. Now, the language of God through the proverb is, “but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.” *Alone*—observe, no one is to share it. Whatever the scorner is to bear, he is to bear alone. All its energy will be concentrated in him; he will be the living, eternal, undivided supporter of that which he is to bear. The folly and the danger of this will be seen then, if we consider what the scorner is to bear.

First. He is to bear his own sins. The real Christian, my brethren, has this one peculiar characteristic; his sins have been borne by the Saviour in whom he trusts. He has believed God, and it has been accounted unto him for righteousness. He has received the benefit of God's recon-

ciling mercy. The scorner has relinquished all claims upon the precious Saviour and His promises; he consents to bear the weight of his own sin, a weight which had already been sufficient to bring down the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to tabernacle in human flesh, to suffer and to die; a weight which spread a gloom more sable than the night over the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. Thus saith the Lord, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The careless, the unconcerned, the scorner, is the man, who, having no vital interest in Jesus Christ, walks abroad with the unmitigated curse of God upon his defenceless brow. He is without a Saviour; he will pass through this world without a Saviour; and stand at the bar of God without a Saviour. This will the scorner bear—bear his own sins. Can he bear up against the weight of sin, before a sin-hating and a sin-avenging God? Careless sinner, what art thou doing; venturing to bear on thine own shoulders a weight which is sufficient to crush a world? Flee to Jesus Christ, who alone is able to save.

Secondly. As the scorner is obliged to bear the weight of his own sins, so will he be obliged to bear the weight of his own sorrows. We are told, that "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward;" and there is no individual experienced in the calamities of human life, but who must know that it is a difficult matter to sustain them. It is certain, that religion is the only real solace of the afflicted; and he whose heart is brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ, knows that he has a source of comfort, which the world can neither give nor take away. But the scorner, the careless neglecter of the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel, throws by the precious balm of Gilead. In all the bereavements of life, he has no Almighty arm on which to lean; he may take the miserable comfort of bending to the stroke of necessity, and being satisfied with that which is

inevitable; but it is all the while a satisfaction filled with secret repinings and sorrows of the heart. It is altogether unlike the feeling which dictated the expression, "the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." As the scorner is without a Saviour, he is without a comforter; and so far *alone*, as to be without an Almighty aid and refuge; he must bear the sorrows for which, as a child of mortality, he has no escape. Pitiable indeed is that state which, while there is no hold on heaven, gives even no substantial rest on earth; which gives up heaven for the world, and then by the world is cheated. And when the hour of departure comes, though he may have the sympathies of friends, the choicest attentions of earth, he has no arm on which to lean, no guide through the darkness of the valley. What a rapture must light on the brow and kindle up the glow of heaven, even in the eye which hath lost its natural lustre, when with a hope in Christ which entereth in beyond the veil, the dying believer is able to say, "yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Brethren, when sickness and sorrow come, and when death is near you will learn what the scorner or neglecter of Christ will bear; you may be sustained under it, but sustained without comfort.

Thirdly. So much for earth; look at this matter in relation to eternity. The scorner will bear the scorn of heaven and of hell. I have said that he would bear the scorn of heaven. There is testimony on this subject, without which I would not have dared to state the proposition, and I present this whole subject to you in the language of the Bible, the word of God Himself: "because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

As the scorner will thus bear the reproach of heaven, he will bear the scorn of hell. It is a principle of common experience, that the sympathy of the wicked is a sympathy of reproaches. There is none of the sympathy of affection in sin. Take the living mass of human corruption which may be concentrated in our prisons, and though there may be a community of suffering, there is no community of affection. Pity and compassion find little place in those who are brought together a congregation of polluted and polluting criminals. Scorn of each other is predominant feeling. In the regions of eternal woe, none will be there who can respect another, or alleviate his woe.

Fourthly. And as if this were not enough, the scorner will bear, what is worse than all, his own eternal self-reproaches. It is the declaration of the scripture, that "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," and it is its portentous interrogatory, "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" If there is on earth any one thing which is more difficult to endure than another, it is the accusation of a man's own conscience. Poverty may be borne, calumny may be borne, affliction may be borne, but the mental anguish of consciously deserved distress is intolerable. I have no doubt, that it is in relation to his own eternal self-reproaches, that one portion of the sufferings of the eternal world is placed before us under the characteristic term of "the worm which dieth not." Yes, scorner—careless, impenitent sinner—rejecter of Jesus Christ—neglecter of His great salvation, you are now nurturing the undying worm of self-reproach, which must of its nature be more bitter, and of anguish more intense, than the unconsuming fire of eternal wrath. There are fearful questions in the word of God: "who can dwell with devouring flames? who can lie down in eternal burnings?" But there is a still more fearful question: "who can bear eternal self-upraidings?" There is a fearful declaration, "that for those who reject the salvation of the gospel, there remaineth no more sacrifice

for sin ;” but it is still more fearful to know, that for such there remaineth no escape from the more than devouring flame, the scorpion sting of self-recrimination. It were terrible to hear, in the great day of judgment, from the lips of the Judge, “thou hast destroyed thyself ;” but it is more unspeakably, more inconceivably terrific, to have the eternal consciousness of having done that deed of self-destruction.

My dear brethren, all this is what the scorner is preparing for himself. Your sins you bear, with none to take from your soul the weight of wrath which rests upon it. Your sorrows you bear with no Almighty comforter. The scorn of heaven you bear, and the scorn of hell, and, worse than all, your own. You will have no refuge from yourself. I beseech you, take this matter into your serious consideration, and now, in this period of your merciful visitation, lay hold of the method of escape provided, and be wise, for yourselves, for your souls, for your own eternity. I call upon you now to choose between the life and the death which is set before you ; a space of brief opportunity is yours to embrace. Oh ! let it not pass ; for a few years, perhaps only days, perhaps only hours, of self-delusion and carnal ease. Oh ! why will ye sacrifice the whole of eternity ?

G. T. BEDELL, D.D.

NOT GLORYING IN THE FLESH.

1 Corinthians i. 29.—“ *That no flesh should glory in His presence.*”

It is the just remark of a good writer, that in building a house, our first care must be to clear away the foundation. Every previous erection and obstacle must be removed, that

we may have an unincumbered site on which to raise the edifice we desire to construct. This is perfectly and appropriately true in rearing the house of genuine and saving faith. If we would lay the foundation rightly and safely, we must clear away every previous form of religion not in accordance with the sacred Scriptures ; we must set aside the corruptions of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and there must be a clear space in our hearts, in order that the foundation of saving faith may be laid, and that a spiritual and holy building, called by an Apostle "the temple of God" may be built thereon.

It was just so that St. Paul acted in his addresses to the several churches to whom he directed his epistles ; and most evident is this, in his letters to the Corinthians. He began by obliterating the false impressions with which they were previously possessed. To magnify the grace of God, and unfold the all-sufficiency of Christ, he exposes the nothingness of man ; and that he might teach them to glory in the Lord alone, he shews them the manifest folly of glorying in the creature, though it should be an apostle.

The church at Corinth was situated in dangerous circumstances. Planted in one of the most wealthy and most corrupt cities of Greece, where every form of worldly temptation would abound, where every influence for evil which the riches and the power, the philosophy and the superstition, the vice and the idolatry of the heathen world would combine to undermine its members, to destroy the faith, and to corrupt the life, it was necessary that they should have some clear and systematic instruction in the truth as it is in Jesus. To carry out this needful purpose the Apostle reminds the Christians of that city that God did not look to worldly distinctions for recommendations to His favour, that it was not among the great, or the wise, or the learned, or the rich, or the powerful, that He selected His people, but rather from the despised and neglected that He made His choice. "Because the foolishness of God is

wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men," He hath, therefore, "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." And the reason why He rejected all human help in building up His church is, "that no flesh should glory in His presence."

First. Not in the *wisdom* of the flesh. Addressing the most civilized nations of the earth,—Greece in its highest attainments of literature and science ; the Jews, too, under the most favoured circumstances for attaining religious knowledge, when they had the Old Testament complete—if wisdom was attainable in the flesh, St. Paul might have expected to have found it in Jew and Greek ; yet, he says, at the 21st verse of the chapter before us, "The world by wisdom knew not God."

We see this in the case of Israel. At the time they were boasting of the Law, through breaking the Law, they were dishonouring God, while they were glorying in their possession of the sacred Scriptures, which testified of Christ, they were rejecting, and about to crucify Him to whom these inspired Scriptures gave witness ; so utterly ineffectual was even God's revealed word to give wisdom to the flesh.

And then, with respect to the Gentiles, how much worse was it with them ! With all their proud philosophy and marvellous attainments they were profoundly ignorant of their Creator, and of the government of the world. They had not sense even to discern the testimony which visible things gave to the invisible. They turned from the glorious Being who made all things, to worship the creature, and even the works of their own hands ; and so God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to follow out to the uttermost the deceitfulness and corruption of their own evil hearts.

And how stands the question now ? Alas ! with all our

boasted advance and progress in knowledge ; with all our accumulated advantages for the cultivation of the human intellect, we must still say, that the flesh cannot glory in its wisdom before God. Look upon the world in this view. The impartial observer will see among its wisest, its most talented and learned, those who can exhaust the resources of science, and, by the power of intellect, govern and direct the minds of men, often the most lamentable ignorance of the things of God ; we see such mighty scholars frequently as dark in their understandings as the least child among us ; the victims of the blindest credulity, bowing down to superstitions as puerile as they are sinful ; or, what is still more fearful, the slaves of a cold and wretched scepticism, the wisdom of the devil. Of such persons we might say, the light itself is become darkness. Their self-confidence has confirmed their self-delusion ; professing themselves wise they have become fools.

Secondly. Let no man glory in the *righteousness* of the flesh. Here we may remark, how the Apostle proceeds to prove both Jews and Gentiles under sin ; with regard to the latter, their sins were open and manifest, their abominations were without concealment, and without excuse. And with respect to the seed of Abraham, out of the law itself—that law of which they made their boast—they might read their own condemnation. Those Scriptures which they professed to regard as the revealed will of God, declare, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” So then, the Apostle concludes all, both Jews and Gentiles, under sin, in order to persuade them to embrace the salvation proclaimed by the Gospel.

And if we turn to man as he now is, and not merely to the most worldly of the species, or as he is found in heathen lands, it will be no difficult thing to shew the utter worthlessness of the righteousness of the flesh. Whatever exactness there may be in the conduct, we shall find, as a general rule, great defectiveness in the principle. It may be all

done, as in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, to please men rather than to please God ; done for selfish purposes, done to build up in self-approval, or to secure the good opinion of those around us ; and the goodness which does not look to God never can reach to God ; and righteousness thus earthly in its motive and purpose never can be an object for exultation in His presence.

Thirdly. From hence it naturally follows that we are not to glory in the *holiness* of the flesh. Where in the whole range of human society shall we find this element ? Is it in the Scribe and Pharisee ? In the Priests and Lawyers of Israel ? In the men who made loud and obtrusive pretensions to its possession ; who boasted that they were God's chosen ones on earth ? Shall we discover it in the men who crucified the Lord of Life and Glory ? No, we must not seek it there.

But, perhaps, we may carry on the search with better success among the people of our own times. Let us see. Does the man who is in the flesh and under its dominion seek after God ? Truly, the idols may be thrown down, the superstitions may be done away, the direct opposition to God's truth, and the violent enmity against God's servants and His Church, may be put aside and suspended ; but still we have plain, palpable, undeniable proofs, that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and that it has no earnest desire to please Him. Do we not find it setting up money or pleasure, or power, or distinction, something or other upon God's shrine, and saying, "These are our Gods." And what is all this but a proof of the utter departure of the heart from Him who claims it as His own ? My brethren, whatever form of religion we may observe, whatever notion of truth we may retain, still, if such be our state and habit, with God as a spiritual Being, the God of the Bible with whom we have to do, we have no holy fellowship, no sacred communion ; we are, in fact, "without God in the world."

And hence the admonition, *fourthly*, is of great force and

propriety, that we should not glory in our *moral freedom*. Corrupt and unholy, defiled in heart, and under the dominion of the world and the flesh, we are in bondage, and need the redemption which we have in Christ Jesus. Slavery may differ in its nature and degree. Some are slaves to appetite, letting mere animal lust rule and govern them, and bind them down to the dust. Others are slaves to the world dragged at the car of ambition, worshippers in the temple of mammon, or seeking glory at the cannon's mouth ; all dreaming dreams, and pursuing shadows, and sacrificing life to vanity. Others, again, are the sworn slaves of Satan, believing his lies, speaking his words, and doing his works, standing up in his behalf against God, and the things and people of God ; the scoffers, and liars, and persecutors, whose whole work on earth is to deceive and to destroy.

Nor is all this slavery lessened by men being unconscious of it. When boasting of their liberty ; when saying as the Jews said to our Lord, " We were never in bondage to any " ; it is then the yoke they wear is most palpable. When asserting that they are their own masters, and that they will think and act as they please, it is then most evident that the iron hath fast rivetted itself into their very souls ; and although they may gild their chains, and think them an ornament ; and although they may dance and delight in the music of those badges of slavery, it is just the liberty of the madman, who presumes upon a free licence to destroy himself.

A mournful picture this of man's natural state ; and mournful because it is truthful. We have not one attribute of our own in which we may glory before God. A just conviction of this patent fact, lies at the foundation of all spiritual humility, and faith, and scriptural hope. In the sight of God every created thing will and must be brought low. Intellect, with its vain imaginations, must submit to be taught, as a little child ; and God alone be exalted.

W. STRONG.

ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE.



Psalm xxxiv. 10.—“ *The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*”



THIS is a delightful promise, sufficient to encourage the most timid to confide in God. It is remarkable element of revelation, that while its great and paramount object is to make man wise unto eternal salvation, it does not overlook his temporal condition. Thus our blessed Lord in the form of prayer which He taught His disciples, having directed them to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, puts the petition into their lips, “Give us this day our daily bread.” All the dealings of God are consistent with one another. Although He has made man a creature destined for immortality, He has made him to partake of blessings that are mortal. He must have food and raiment and numberless necessities, in his sojourn through the world. True religion neither over-rates nor under-values these things. It gives them their proper place; and while it reproves and condemns the avarice and sensuality of a worldly mind, at the same time it rebukes the senseless austerity, the studied abstemiousness, the proposed indifference to worldly good, which are equally at war with the promptings of our nature, and the claims of duty to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow-men.

To illustrate the promise in the text—that “they who seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing.” I will offer the following observations :

I. For the supply of our temporal wants, we are all dependent on God.

Temporal enjoyments are no more the result of chance and contingency, than the formation and arrangement of the

wondrous globe on which we dwell. Natural causes may be the means and instruments of their production, but they are not their authors. The industry of man may be employed in procuring them, but his very toils furnish affecting admonitions of his dependence.

We are prone to stop at several causes in our survey of temporal good ; but the Bible teaches us to ascend to the great first cause. Man is to plough, and sow, and dress his land ; these are instrumental operations, but of themselves they have never given fertility to the harvest field, or clothed the silk worm, or called into being the humblest flower. "Beware," said God to His ancient people, "lest when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, lest thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, and thou say in thine heart, "My power, and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth." This were neither sound philosophy, nor true religion. The providence of God mingles itself with all the affairs and circumstances of men. It extends itself alike to the drop of a bucket and to the ocean, to the dust of the balance and to the whole material universe; to every individual of the human family, and to the entire race. The goodness that visits the greater also visits the less. The children of poverty and want may have deeper impressions of their dependence than the sons and daughters of affluence ; while in sober verity, the imperial purple, the splendid palace, and the sumptuous fare of princes, are as truly from God, as the coarse garb, the shattered tenement, and the scanty food of the beggar in rags.

Nature herself teaches us, that our insufficiency is absolute, while God's sufficiency is boundless. How many secondary causes, not one of which is under human control, must be preserved in perfect operation, to secure daily subsistence to a single individual ! What a delicate and nice adjustment of all the laws of nature, in order to furnish him food

to eat and raiment to put on ! What a multitude of bodies in the planetary system must be constantly and wisely directed, in order to shelter him from the summer's heat and the winter's cold ! What orbs must shine, and what clouds obscure ; what springs must be filled, and what rivers flow ; and how many intelligent agents must be sustained in their course of plodding industry, in order to furnish those comforts which make human life cheerful and happy ! Nay, all this is needful even to furnish the wardrobe of the humblest cottager, or to procure a loaf of bread, or one poor corn of barley ! Had we an angel's eye and wing, to follow out and trace the ten thousand influences of the Creator's agency, and mark His unwearied care and love, how deeply would every right minded individual feel, that in the hand of God is the breath of every living thing !

There is another thought suggested by this part of the subject. Its language holds forth no promise of what the world would account luxuries, or opulence. It tells us simply "that they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." This defines the nature and the measure of the promised supply. What God gives is good—proper—the best for us : and that He will bestow, not it may be to the extent of our desires, but to the limit of our real necessities. And such is the character of all temporal promises. They teach us to moderate our aspirations after present enjoyments. Good things—not great things He engages to provide. "Verily, thou shalt be fed." He assures the poorest of His people that "bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure." He regulates his earthly blessings by what He knows of our real condition, and what will be for our eternal good. If we have food and raiment, He bids us therewith to be content. He would have us willing to live day by day, by faith in His word. If we perform our duty rightly to Him, we need not take thought for the morrow, so as to be unduly anxious about its bread. It has been justly said, "If a christian man were

to make the experiment, he would find it a very difficult thing to pray for great wealth." The spirit of covetousness and of prayer do not dwell together in the same bosom. We are instructed to ask only as we need ; there is danger in asking more, God may give more, but it will be wise not to ask for it, lest He should say of us as He did of the discontented Israelites of old, "I gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls." True piety is apt to be stunted in its growth, and to wither away under the burning sun of prosperity, or crushed under the overwhelming cares of opulence.

II. Delightful as is the promise in the text, we must not overlook the persons to whom it is made. It is concisely expressed, as "they that seek the Lord." This is the mark of a believer, in plain words it signifies the people of God. They are a praying people, and our Lord has directed them to ask for their daily bread. He, our heavenly Father, knows our wants before hand ; nevertheless, He will have our requests spread before Him. He is a Father, and "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." It is our duty to ask Him for whatever we want ; it pleases and honours Him. It is an acknowledgment of his Sovereignty, and a confession of our need.

And this is a great privilege. We are allowed, invited, commanded, "in all things by prayer and supplication, to let our requests be made known unto God." How manifold are our daily necessities ! And He is pleased to hear His children ask for a supply. There are many wants which He knows of, but of which we are unconscious. He sees the exact necessity in each particular position, and the precise way in which it can be effectually relieved. How cheering in all our perplexities and trials, to be able to place them before a merciful God in prayer, assured as we are, that He careth for us, and will give what we ask, if it is good and fitting, or replace it by something more suitable to our state and necessity.

This is indeed a purchased privilege. Access to the throne of grace has been opened on the cross. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and the way of seeking the Lord is "consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." Every good thing we receive, has in it the sweetness of a special favour conferred by love. This makes the smallest blessing great. The cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, is pleasing to Christ : and as coming from love, is refreshing to the believer to whom it is presented. It gives a charm to every earthly enjoyment, to look upon it as flowing from the same fountain of grace from which come all our spiritual blessings. It is the Christian's union with Christ that makes his daily food children's bread. The child of this world may have much more than he, but that is only prison allowance. A crust from a father's table is better than the costliest allowance awarded to a felon.

The privilege thus assured to those who seek the Lord, is based upon innumerable promises of the blessed God. Both the Old and New Testament abounds with instances. "The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season." Thus our blessed Lord tells us—"seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things"—food and clothing—"shall be added unto you." It is the Christian's privilege to roll all his concerns upon God ; and when he can see nothing but the promise to rest upon, to follow the example of his Lord in the wilderness who repelled the tempter, saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord shall man live."

My brethren, if our heavenly Father is so willing to supply our earthly necessities, He is not the less so to satisfy our soul's desires. We need the Bread of Life for

our souls, as well as food for our bodies. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, He will fill us. The lips of eternal truth and love have said—"He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S COMING UPON HUMAN DESTINY.

Luke ii. 34. — "*And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.*"

Simeon was a good old man, who had long been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He came to the Temple, took Jesus in his arms, and blessed God and said, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." And he blessed the parents, and said unto Mary, "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

In discoursing from this passage, let us view :—

1. *The Object Set*; in other words, the *history, character, and standing* of the Redeemer disclosed. It is interesting

to know these on account of the diverse treatment he receives, and the opposite destinies which are to be the result. The object presented is the Lord Jesus Christ ; or in the language of the text, "*This child is set.*" He was once a child. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." He was born, and in circumstances of poverty—in a state of deep humiliation. The place was a manger ; and he grew up from a child of obscurity, to be a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He probably wrought at a humble trade, and had no connections to give him worldly influence and made no pretensions to worldly greatness : when he entered upon his public career, it was a career of humble, strenuous, untiring benevolence. "He went about doing good." He spake, and the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, the lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised to life. For his course of goodness, he met a reward of obloquy—a death of finished torture and ignominy. He died for the world that believing, they might not die eternally. He rose from the grave on the third day, ascended to heaven, entered for us a priest in the temple above—became seated, for the protection of his cause, for the completion of the commenced work of redemption, on the mediatorial throne. There he is now set, soliciting regard, and thence dispensing the gifts of mercy to the rebellious. Wonderful indeed, is his history. His *character* is readily defined. It was shown in the acts of his life. There were seen all the attributes of man. He *was*, a man as we are, with a proper and perfect human soul and body. There were seen also the attributes of the Deity. He *was*—he is truly God, both God and man ; having two natures in mysterious connection ; being human, as to the one, divine as to the other. He is called "The mighty God ;"—"God over all blessed for ever." He is the Being who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." "He created all things that are in

heaven and in earth, and without him was not any thing made that is made." He will speak, and all who are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth, and he will be enthroned in glory and encompassed with authority, as judge of quick and dead. "All Judgment is committed to the Son, that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." He is honoured with divine honours ; he is worshipped by saints on earth, and by the redeemed and the angels in heaven. Not only wonderful the history, we add, wonderful the character, immeasurably exalted the position of the once slain but now reigning Redeemer.

II. We come now to the fact indicated in the text—*that the Saviour is rejected by some and received by others, and the cause or reason of it.* The fact is notorious. We see it in the holy, prayerful, consistent lives of some who walk by faith, and live to glorify God and do good to men. They have received Christ. Ask them, and they will tell you, their hope is Christ. We see the counterpart in the worldliness and irreligion of immense multitudes of others. They have heard of Christ but their lives testify, that they are rejecters of his mercy. It was long ago predicted that this would be the case. "He is despised and rejected of men," "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." In the language of Simeon, "he is set for a sign which shall be spoken against!"

What now is the reason of a fact so strange?

That he should be received and loved, coming on such an errand of love, would not be strange. He deserves the confidence and homage of the world. Why then do men reject him? The cause lies deep in that moral disease, that controlling depravity, which infects and pervades man's nature. That, which constitutes an urgent reason for the reception of Christ, operates as the efficient and deadly cause of his rejection. But where lies the specific objection or difficulty? Where the point of repulsion? In the character or the doctrine, in the nature or the principles of Christ? It is

not in the character. Worldly unsanctified men care but little, whether Christ is Divine, superangelic, or merely human. When the dignity of Christ is lowered, it is done, not because that dignity in itself considered, is offensive, but for the purpose of escaping from certain disrelished moral consequences which are invariably associated with that Divine and supreme dignity; namely, the fact and necessity of atonement for sin by death of Christ, and the spiritual regeneration by the Holy Ghost. It is emphatically the cross that is an offence—an offence which never will cease but with sin. Atonement and regeneration are not barren dogmas, unmeaning speculations; they are heavenly truths, instinct with life, humbling and joyous in their efficacy.

They are humbling; they do what God intended they should do—stain the pride of all human glory, divest the transgressor of all ground of boasting—and lead him to acknowledge, if saved, that it is wholly by grace—that he is a brand plucked from the burning. The doctrine of the necessity of spiritual regeneration, a change of heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, implies, yea proceeds upon the broad ground that there is no moral goodness, no true love to God in the natural heart—the heart of a sinner. It is because there is none, that it must be produced—because men are dead in sins, that they must be quickened and raised to life by the power of God. But how plain to see, that we are on disputed, resisted, hated ground. Bring home this truth to the bosom of the individual sinner, and how often will he repel it with marked displeasure. Still it is the distinct testimony of God, that the carnal mind is not only without love to God, but “is enmity against God, is not subject to His law, neither indeed can be.” This testimony is rejected, on account of the pride of the human heart; and the Gospel is rejected, and the Saviour thrust away, because he presses the fact of sin, and then bases upon it the unqualified declaration, “Ye must be born again.”

The doctrine of atonement proceeds upon the ground that

our own best righteousnesses are but as filthy rags—that we cannot, by any obedience, morality, prayers, almsgivings, procure the forgiveness of our sins and propitiate the favour of offended Deity.

On this account especially, is the cross an offence, namely its conclusiveness. There is no other possible mode of pardon. Every thing else, however lovely and of good report among men, goes for nothing here. You must lay your guilty soul down in the dust before God, to be sprinkled with this blood, and pardoned by his dying goodness, or it must lie for ever under the wrath and curse of the Almighty. Men generally dislike to be thus stripped of all personal merit, and to be shut up to one way, one name, method and faith. Yet the gospel does this. Christ is this only name; his blood the only ground of forgiveness. Hence he becomes an object to be spoken against.

These feelings of dislike and repugnance would keep all from the Saviour and heaven, if left to themselves. Blessed be God that any are subdued and saved. The reason is found in the electing love of God, and the administered grace of the Holy Spirit.

I close with a single remark—namely, *The coming of Christ into the world has imposed upon all very solemn and weighty responsibilities.* No one can escape from these responsibilities. Christ will have a mighty influence on your destiny, and you can do nothing to hinder it; nor can you do any thing against Christ. Whatever you may attempt in hostility to him, you will only injure and wound yourself. “It is hard to kick against the pricks.” If you dash your foot upon a rock, you hurt not the rock—you hurt only yourself. If you act wrong, you are ruined; if right, you are saved. And is it not of great consequence to be saved from such a doom, and woe and flame as will overtake the neglecter of Jesus? Then act right. Do to day what a retrospect from eternity will approve. As a first thing, an imperative *indispensable* duty, believe on Christ; with a

penitent confiding heart receive the atonement he has made, follow the example he has set, and obey the laws he has given, and holiness will be your characteristic, and life eternal your portion. Oh, seize the hand of mercy which the Saviour holds out for your relief, and it shall raise you to life, and purity, and endless glory.

G. SHEPARD.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Psalm i. 5.—“*The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.*”

WHEN an important case is about to be decided in a court of justice, it is deemed no mark of enthusiasm to appear specially interested. If the question involve the life of a valued friend, or if even a very large amount of property is depending, it is natural, it is reasonable, to inquire how the trial is likely to terminate. And it would indicate madness, or at least very gross insensibility, if the individual whose life, or whose property was at stake, should be entirely thoughtless in regard to his trial. If then God has appointed a great day of decision—a day for settling the destinies of every individual in bliss or wo, according to his character—how solemnly interesting must that day be; and how reasonable, how suitable, that we inquire now whether we are prepared to stand trial.

The Judge Himself has assured us, that “*the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*”; and among the ungodly He includes all who remain unreconciled through the blood

of the Lamb. If then you have sinned and remain impenitent, the warning is to you ; you cannot stand the last trial, but must meet a dreadful overthrow. To the candid mind this certainty of the sinner's destruction is now capable of perfect demonstration.

I. None will deny that *the law of God*, which is holy, just and good, explicitly condemns the sinner, and consigns him to the second death. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "He that offends in one point, is guilty of all." And "not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." By the *law*, therefore, no man can be justified. And it contains no provision for pardon. On this ground, then, the sinner can never stand in the judgment.

II. He will not be able to stand in the last trial, because *all the witnesses will be against him*. His *companions in sin* will testify against him. Sinners in this world not unfrequently encourage one another in transgression ; and if one is arrested, and brought to trial, his fellows in transgression sometimes swear falsely to save him from condemnation. But at the tribunal of God every mouth that would justify sin will be stopped. The false swearer, the liar, will feel it utterly impossible to evade Omniscience. Thus every wicked plot, every abomination in which they have encouraged one another, will be openly exposed to their "*shame and everlasting contempt*."

Again, the *examples of the righteous* will testify against the impenitent. It will be in vain for sinners there to plead, as they sometimes do here, that they could not help continuing in sin ; that they were urged on by the violence of natural inclination. For the examples of the righteous will testify, that others, who were once of like dispositions and in like circumstances, have repented, have broken off their iniquities by turning unto the Lord. At the tribunal of Heaven the example and condition of the righteous will

testify, that *they* only were wise, and that all the impenitent were *fools*. That "*madness* was in their *heart* while they lived." And the example of the wise, instead of provoking a smile of pity or contempt, will only pour eternal shame on all the finally impenitent.

Again, the sinner's own *awakened conscience and memory* will testify against him in that day. Conscience may now slumber in perfect insensibility. For when the slumbers of death are broken, and the terrors of the last judgment burst upon the view, then too will the slumbers of conscience be effectually broken, and a long chain of condemning recollections rush on the mind. Then will it be recollected, how in early life, or riper years, the affecting sounds of death, judgment and eternity did ring on the ear, thrill the soul, agitate the heart, and almost persuade you to be a Christian. But conscience will there testify how you slighted the monition, resisted the truth, and grieved the Holy Spirit. Memory too will on that day be amazingly quickened. Then every act or thought of injustice to man or dishonour to God—all the millions of your now forgotten sins, of thought, and word, and deed, will come up in terrible array before you. Oh, what an immense, dark, thick cloud, to break at once in thunder on the conscience ! And will not conscience be roused to fury, and declare you verily guilty, when God shall thus "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing" ? But,

Again, the *sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ* will testify against the wicked at the day of judgment. That same Jesus who hung on the cross, will then fill the throne. But, O how changed ! That countenance, once marred, now glorious as ten thousand suns shining in their strength. This appearance will then say with emphasis to such as now slight his offered grace : *These arms were once extended for your salvation—for sinners like you, this head was crowned with thorns—this body and soul bore the tremendous weight of a world's redemption.* And this exhibition

will be as vivid lightning to the sinner's eye. It will furnish overwhelming proof of his ingratitude and guilt, whom such love could not melt.

III. Consider then next, *the Eternal Judge will be inflexibly strict in interpreting and upholding the law.* The omniscient Judge understands those laws which Himself has made. And he can not but have an unchanging veneration for them in all their strictness and purity; for He is without variableness and shadow of turning. And from the record which He keeps He can compare distinctly the life and heart of every man with what is written in the book of His statutes. And when this great God shall exhibit the infinite purity of His law, and contrast it with the sinner's vileness, then the poor wretch, if he have no Saviour to plead for him, must feel that he is indeed undone for ever—that it is utterly impossible to stand such a trial. But,

III. The impenitent sinner at God's bar *will have no Advocate.* At a human tribunal, when the culprit is arraigned, though his case appear exceedingly bad—though all the witnesses be against him, and the Judge inflexibly strict—still he sometimes cherishes hope, from the ingenuity and eloquence of his advocate. But for the impenitent at Jehovah's bar no advocate will be found; not one of his boldest companions in sin will venture a syllable in his defence; not one of those foul spirits of darkness who may have seduced him with lies, will now *care* for his safety; not one of the bright and generous millions who encircle the throne will *have a heart* to palliate his guilt. And having slighted the mediation of Christ, he can have no part in *his* mercy. Every impenitent sinner, therefore, on that day must bear his own burden. He must hear the condemning witnesses, the eternal law, the irreversible sentence, without any advocate whatever in his behalf. How then can he stand the trial?

And besides all this, the saints will judge the earth,

giving their entire and just consent to the sentence of the Judge eternal. If then all the witnesses be against you, and God himself be inflexibly strict—and no kind advocate shall plead your cause, will you be able to endure the trial?"

Ah, no! Every angel of light would say, No; every man in his right mind must say, No; this controversy is with *Omnipotence*, and God is right and you are wrong, and there is no possibility of standing; when "the great day of his wrath is come." Wise therefore will it be for every one, to take the advice which the Saviour himself hath kindly and earnestly given, "*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.*"

Hearken, then, sinner, to the advice of infinite wisdom. Settle at once this awful controversy. Have the courage, the honesty, the magnanimity to confess before men and angels, that God is right and you are wrong. Fly to the only Saviour, to the all prevailing Intercessor. Accept his offered mediation, and be at peace. For it is madness, inexpressible madness, as well as guilt, to remain unreconciled to God, and brave the eternal wrath without an advocate, without one favouring witness, with no friend on the throne, nor one pitying saint or angel among all the millions who attend the trial.

Fellow sinner, in view of these considerations, what will you now do? "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." "Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son lest he be angry, and thou perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." For "who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?"

A. DICKINSON.

THE FUNERAL OF THE SOUL.

Matt. xxv. 46.—" *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

As we are all familiar with the event of death, so are we also with its usual accompaniment—a funeral. We associate these events together, as the one naturally and necessarily follows the other.

But while we recognize the fact, and often witness the funeral of the body, there is also what may be called, *the funeral of the soul*. If it be a fact, that natural death causes such a change in the state of the body, that funeral rites must be performed, and the body removed from all connexion with the living, we know from Scripture, that there will be, in the winding up of this world's history, funeral solemnities in which the soul will be removed from all connexion with the holy and the happy for ever. This is the thought we shall now illustrate.

I. Various facts are implied in the event—the funeral of the soul—the soul consigned to everlasting punishment.

We may remark, that the kindest efforts had been made *to prevent the necessity of such a funeral*. All strive, in their respective circles, to arrest the hand of death, when sickness assails a friend.

And has there not been much done to prevent the funeral of the soul? Has not an atoning sacrifice of infinite value been offered? Has not the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly Dove, been spreading his wings to stay such a catastrophe? And has there been anywhere in a Christian land, a human soul that has not been surrounded by kind friends who have been deeply interested in preventing its funeral? Has there not been warning—entreaty—prayer? And could benevolence have prevailed in leading the sinner from his sins to the Saviour—would his soul have perished?

THE FUNERAL OF THE SOUL.

But the sentence in the text implies, that all the efforts of Christian kindness and love have *failed*. So we judge when we attend the funeral of the body. We see that all the exertions of tenderness and affection ; and all the assiduity of undrooping watchfulness, have been defeated by disease and death. The king of terrors has conquered.

So the idea of the funeral of the soul shews, that all the means employed for its salvation have signally failed. The love of Christ has been pleaded in vain. The monitions of conscience have been disregarded. The spirit of grace has unsuccessfully striven. The entreaties of pious friends have fallen on heedless ears. The warnings of Scripture have been wasted on a heart that would not listen nor yield.

With the funeral of the soul, we cannot avoid associations of *sorrow*. It is so in reference to the body. Its burial ! How often it implies the interment of sweetest happiness, and fondest hopes ! The opened grave—the funeral knell—the mourning apparel—the solemn words—“ashes to ashes, dust to dust”—pour a tide of bitterness through the bosoms of the bereaved. What sighs and tears are present at such a scene !

And what sadness there has been over the soul now lost ! The tears of a compassionate Saviour have been shed over the spirit whose destiny is now perdition. The sympathy and grief of the sincere and genuine people of God, mourned for those whose sinful courses were evidently hastening them to the bottomless pit. Every association of thought with the burial of an impenitent sinner is one of sombre and gloom. Tears more bitter have never been shed in this world, than those of truly religious relations over those dear to them by the ties of nature, who, by persistence in sin, were wrapping themselves in the winding sheet of moral death, and making the funeral of the soul at the Great Day, a dreadful calamity.

Once more. The funeral of the soul is conclusive proof of its *spiritual death*. It is so with the mortal remains.

Their interment is a work of necessity. The state of natural death, is at war with the health and life of survivors, and there must be a separation of the dead from us. All nations, not sunk in absolute barbarism, obey this law beyond question.

So of the funeral of the soul. The event of its spiritual death renders its burial imperative. It must be removed, interred. It has henceforth no communion with the actual servants of God, than dead bodies have with living ones. It is only just for the Infinite to consign them to their own place, who would not associate in spirit with the holy on earth. The day of gracious visitation is past, the overtures of mercy have been rejected, and are now for ever withdrawn. The impenitent and unbelieving are therefore "sent away into everlasting punishment," while the righteous are admitted to "life eternal."

II. I now pass to the various circumstances attending the funeral of the soul.

1. Consider *numbers*. A vast multitude of souls will have the rites of burial performed for them *at the same time*. All that finally remain dead in trespasses and sins, will be consigned to the same dark and dreadful abode. All the fallen angels belong to that number, together with every member of the human family who had lived and died in unpardoned sin. We have no means of knowing the aggregate number, but we have melancholy reason for believing it will be very great. What vast multitudes in all ages have passed into eternity unreconciled to God! How many are now living in that growing blindness of mind and hardness of heart, which affords sad presage of final ruin! From the vision of St. John recorded in the close of the sixth chapter of the Book of Revelation, it is evident that the Great Day will witness the funeral of innumerable millions!

2. Immense multitudes will be *convened as witnesses*. It is common in the case of the interment of a distinguished personage, or when the mode of the death of the individual

has been extraordinary, for numerous spectators to assemble at the rites of burial. Some from respect—some from curiosity—some from sympathy, crowd in view of the grave. But the number gathered together to see the procession—even of a Wellington, is as a handful of grain to the mass on the sea shore, when compared with the scene in the last day, “when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” *All* the angels! what a congregation! An apostle speaks of the angels as “an innumerable company.” And we read of different ranks—Arch-angels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers. And with them shall be gathered *all* nations. The sea shall give up its dead. The grave of a thousand generations shall disgorge its prey. And all the living then on earth will mingle in the countless throng to receive their doom according to the deeds done in the body. It is written, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

3. Consider also, that the funeral of lost souls will be attended with an *exhibition of their characters*. This we are assured is a certain part of the great solemnity now under observation. The blessed God will shew the reasons for the sentence He will then pronounce. The moral character of the soul condemned will be fully disclosed—for “God will bring every secret thing into judgment.” Then it will be seen, that such was the sinner’s enmity against his Creator—his opposition to his government, and resistance to his will, as to proclaim the justice of the final decree. The Judge will not declare—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” till He has shewn to the witnessing universe, that the banished were totally unqualified for Heaven, and that their unbelief and impenitence had fitted them for no other place than the regions of woe. So startling and awful will be the display of human guilt, that all

who behold the scene will concur in the righteousness of the decision.

4. *Consciousness* on the part of the condemned, will be a bitter ingredient in the cup of their woe. On earth, the burial solemnity is for the inanimate and unconscious. Not so in the great funeral of which we speak. Then, those to be buried in the bottomless pit, will know where they are, and all the terrible facts of their position. They will see the "Judge Eternal" as "He comes in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory." The white throne is in sight, and all the holy beings that compose the vast assembly. The opened volume—the language of accusation—the map of earthly life—the guilt with which they are defiled—the frowning face of Eternal Justice—they are conscious of all. Not one of the awful solemnities of the occasion is undiscerned, and not one but has a response of the soul's emotions in their utmost intensity. What a harrowing thought is this! Here are intelligent minds, in all the sensitiveness of rational existence, beholding their own funeral rites, and conscious of the tremendous fact, that their grave henceforth is companionship with the devil and his angels!

5. At the interment of the body, *men* commit it to the house appointed for all the living, but in the case under notice, *God himself is the Great Executor*. It is his voice that summons death and hell to give up their dead. It is He that charges the guilty with their rebellion. It is his lips that shall pronounce the sentence—"Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire." It is He whose authority has been despised, who will now execute it. The solemnity is so momentous that He will commit it to no created hands. He has issued the law of the trial, and He will vindicate its insulted honour.

6. Finally. There is yet one other circumstance in which the funeral of the soul differs from that of the body. There will be *no resurrection of buried spirits*. We stand by the grave of a friend. We see the coffin that contains

his mortal remains lowered to its resting-place. But it will come forth : at the sound of the trump of God it will arise.

But there are no such associations as these connected with the burials in the eternal world. "He that is unjust shall be unjust still." "These shall go away"—no voice will ever recall them. No being will stand by the side of that awful sepulchre, and cry—"Come forth." All is now final. There will be no return. The buried soul will be wrapped in the shroud of everlasting death !

Now let us take home to the deepest ponderings of our hearts, two facts. *First*, that each of us will be *personally present* on this Great Funeral Day. The Judge, the Throne, the Book—the Angels—men redeemed and unredeemed, we shall all see. And all that is to be heard there—we shall hear. On our ears will burst the sentence of the Judge—the anthems of Angels—the wailings of the condemned.

Secondly—there is danger lest the funeral of *our own souls* may be then performed. Have we not sinned ? And is not death—eternal death—the penalty ? Do we say we have escaped it by "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ?" Truly, these are elements of salvation : but how many have fallen into deadly delusion concerning them ; have taken up with the form without the spirit ; and have fatally imagined, that a few tears or prayers may suffice to blot out the sins of threescore years and ten !

Oh, mariner on the sea of life, the beacon blazes before you, kindled by God's own hand ! Will you not heed its light ? Will you still persevere amidst the shoals and rocks of a dangerous coast, till you are engulfed beneath the rolling surge ? May God prevent it ! And may you fly to Him who delivereth from the wrath to come ! Amen.

H. B. HOOPER.

SUFFERINGS AND GLORY.

Romans viii. 18.—“ *For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*”

THE sentiment expressed by the Apostle in these words, seems to have been one on which his mind loved to dwell. Thus addressing the Corinthians he says—“ Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

The present is a state of afflictions and trials. They fall more or less on all; they come at all times. The Apostle represents the entire world, as in a burdened and suffering condition—not only Christians, but the “ whole creation, rational and irrational, groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.” But as it respects believers, the prospect is delightful. Sharp as present sufferings may be, the glory to be revealed hereafter, will infinitely outweigh them all. The difference between the two is incomparable.

I. Let us take a brief view of present sufferings—that is, the sufferings of the present life. There may be a reference in the mind of the Apostle, to the peculiar tribulations of Christians in the then cruel and persecuting period. But we need not confine our thoughts to that time, since the trials common to man are not limited to any particular country or age. We shall however restrict our observations to the afflictions peculiar to the christian character and experience. As the disciple of Christ has joys with which the stranger intermeddleth not, so he has sorrows of which the mere worldly mind has no experience.

The Christian suffers from conflicts with sin; and if it gets the advantage, as it sometimes will, there is keen re-

morse and bitterness of soul. David calls it the anguish of broken bones. And more than this, he sometimes suffers from the assaults of his adversary. The temptations of our Lord from this quarter were very great; and as it was with the Master, so it will be with the disciple. The great enemy will assail him, and turn for a season, even the springs of his happiness into waters of wormwood.

There are sufferings to the Christian from an opposing, not to say a persecuting world. The masses of mankind love not the pure gospel of Christ; the world hates it for its claims, its doctrines, its precepts. Its avowed believers in times happily past, have encountered all the ills human malice and power could dispense. All the instruments and engines of death have been often employed in the work of torture and destruction of life. Few but have realized with more or less of severity, the meaning of the declaration,—“We must through such tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”

But there is a more refined persecution: it strikes not the body; the iron enters the soul. There are taunts, sneers, the shafts of ridicule, the reproaches of mockery. The saying of Christ has been verified in every period of Christianity, that a man's foes are those of his own household. And no suffering for Christ's sake can be more bitter, than that which arises from the “cruel mockings” of relatives. It is a strong confirmation of St. Paul's words, “the carnal mind is enmity with God,” when those are the objects of unnatural hate in their own family circle, simply because they love the Saviour, and follow Him in the regeneration.

The Christian equally with others, is also exposed to the vicissitudes of the world; the defeating of earthly plans, the blighting of deep cherished hopes; and sometimes to the evils of deep and distressing poverty. Even Christ himself had not where to lay his head.

There are also sufferings arising from sickness and decay.

There, at some time, and in some form, all must expect to encounter. If any have been spared for a long period of years without feeling the withering hand of disease, let them be thankful; but not presume that it will be always so. The Christian may have "strong consolation" in the season of pain, but let him not think that he shall escape the trial.

There are the sufferings also attendant on bereavements. The cords of attachment are often strong, and bind closely heart to heart. When these are sundered, it is as though every thing were gone. The circumstances, perhaps, all administer to the heart's deep anguish. The dear-loved departed fell among strangers; sleeps in a foreign grave, or on the coral bed. And while faith assures him that all is wisely done, yet the Christian feels the separating stroke. Memory recurs to those scenes and thoughts which are adapted to harrow still more the already wounded sensibilities. The room, the seat, the garden, the field, the walk which were familiar to the lost one; all the little arrangements as he left them; the books as he marked and laid them by; the garments where he hung them; the trees those hands did plant; the grounds those feet did tread—each is made to contribute its pang in this ministry of grief, till the heart is surcharged to overflowing.

I will not dwell longer upon the sufferings of this present time. They are manifold and inevitable. We may be spared for a season, but sooner or later each must take his share. A long forborne stroke, when it comes, is apt to be heavy. It is a world of change and of suffering. There are withered hearts and blighted hopes; friends parting, graves opening, tears flowing. There are the pains of the body, and the sorrows of the mind, the afflictions of life and the struggles of death, and of this cup the Christian drinks as deeply as do others.

II. Now let us turn our thoughts to "the glory which shall be revealed in us," or to us.

Here we are struck with the contrast. The sufferings are matters of experience; the glory, only of faith. The former are known; the latter is yet to be revealed. It could not now be fully disclosed: if it were, our nature could not bear the splendour of the manifestation. The mortal eye could not sustain the brightness of the vision. The Spirit of inspiration shadows forth the scene as far as human powers can comprehend it. It is a glory that shall be revealed in us. A glory in the presence of God—the glorious liberty of the children of God;—the riches of the glorious inheritance of the saints—an exceeding and an eternal weight—one of the strongest expressions which the tongue of man ever uttered, or his pen ever recorded. We are farther told of life; the eternal life; the crown of life; a life hid with Christ in God; an enduring substance; an immovable kingdom; a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Christians are to walk in white; they are to reign with Christ; they are to have bodies fashioned like unto his glorious body; they are to be holy as God is holy.

These various modes of expression are intended to set forth as vividly as the nature of the case admits, the future happiness of the now suffering children of God. That state of purity and blessedness is their sure possession: a state in which there will be no sin; none of those bitter sufferings and conflicts and mournings with which they are familiar here; where all tears will be wiped away, all trials merged in triumphs. There, too, we shall renew our intercourse with redeemed friends, and be exalted to visible companionship with angels. There, too, our knowledge will be perfect—we shall know even as we are known. There, too, in a word our love will be without a chill, and emboss with its sweet and hallowed influence every desire and every joy.

III. And now let us proceed to St. Paul's estimate of the one in comparison with the other. Rather, we should say, it is a *contrast* rather than a *comparison*. There is no

resemblance between a momentary sorrow, and an infinite joy. So reckoned the Apostle amid the heavy trials of his lot. Burdened with the care of all the churches—carrying about with him that dread infirmity, the thorn in the flesh—surrounded with enemies as savage as wild beasts—insulted, beaten, and driven from place to place, if any were competent to tell what the sufferings of the present time were, he was the man. More than this, he had been in the third heavens—had seen and heard things not to be uttered—had tasted joys too vast for human lips to utter or mortal ears to hear; and this is the conclusion to which he came, that the sufferings of earth formed no comparison with the joys of heaven. As one who had his dearest interests at stake, he weighed the matter deliberately; he calculated carefully; he balanced the account, and this was the winding up—"I reckon, I consider, judge and pronounce, the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Can we hesitate in coming to the same conclusion? Suppose we put the question to a higher authority—to one of those spirits before the throne who has come out of great tribulation. Be the umpire one who has encountered every form and variety of trial—the direst malignity of persecution—the most desolating strokes of bereavement—the tortures of a racked and groaning body, and the still keener anguish of a wounded spirit. That spirit, once thus afflicted is now resting in the embrace of infinite and protecting love. That heart, which when on earth, drooped at times beneath the weight of its sorrows, now swells with the fulness of unutterable joys. It has felt its last pang, and is now in perfect peace. Thus that redeemed spirit has tried both sides; has had experience of the worst griefs of time, and of the pleasures for evermore at the right hand of God. Ask him his judgment; what would he say? As he looked back upon this little point and speck of trouble, and then thought of the immeasurable felicities of his present

immortality, he would with strongest emphasis exclaim—
Not worthy to be compared.

But though there is no comparison, there is a connection between present suffering and future glory. We see here as every where, the blessed God, bringing good out of evil, and turning the curse into a blessing. The character that has met and weathered the storm, now stands the firmer for the blasts it has successfully sustained. Our glory is to be weightier for the afflictions which precede it.

And sweeter, too, will be fruition of repose, for the sufferings of our earthly course. To the weary disciple, the hour of deliverance at length arrives : and as the body is sending out the moanings of death, the spirit hears the melodies of heaven. To such an one, rising for ever above the billows of the passage, and parting with pains and griefs to meet no more, how refreshing the rest, how sweet the peace, heightened by the scenes of conflict and suffering through which it has passed ! We are in the dark here ; we know but little. Blessed shall we be, if we reach that state, and learn by experience the glory that shall be revealed !

What a lesson this subject puts before the sinner ! what a lecture it reads to the worldling, who lives for pleasure and strives for a heaven in the gratification of lusts and joys that war against the soul ! Sad that a man should barter heaven for a momentary indulgence of his sensual appetites ; and purchase the fleeting delights of time at the price of the glory to be revealed. Let me remind you, that you must soon leave the gildings, the baubles, and the vanities you now pursue ; and go forth to meet the eternal ! Awake ! Watch ! Strive ! or this lying and deceitful world will work for you an exceeding and eternal weight of *misery*.

SHEPARD.

THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

—o—
 John vi, 45.—“*It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God.*”
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THE place where this is written in the prophets, is the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah and the thirteenth verse. The same sentiment is also expressed by Jeremiah and others of the prophets, as a special element of the Christian dispensation, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The sentiment of the prophets, endorsed by our blessed Lord, conveys the great promise of spiritual illumination to all Christians. We must, however, observe, that this teaching consists, not in revealing to the mind any new truths, but in enabling it to see and feel the power of the truths already revealed in the Scriptures. The Spirit of God leads the humble and teachable to see their need of divine teaching; and they pray—“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” And thus it is written—“They shall be all taught of God.” “The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way.”

I would now invite you to attend to a few of those great and divine truths which God hath taught us in His Holy Word.

1. He has revealed the fact, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.” This truth is doubted by some, by others is denied; but the Holy Ghost teaches real Christians that it is a fact. By being made acquainted with themselves, they are convinced that their hearts were deceitful above all things and

desperately wicked, that they were carnal, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed could be, while they continued in that state. They have found that they loved themselves and the world more than God; and by comparing this with his requirement, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," they have found, that it was enmity against him. It was serving the creature; and they could not serve two masters. They must "love the one, and hate the other; or hold to the one and despise the other," they could "not serve God and mammon." And when they found, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that they did serve one, they felt that they were in fact opposed to the other. Hence, instead of boasting of the goodness of their own hearts, or the moral excellence of human nature; they cried, "Woe is me, I am undone." They were, in their own view, as they were in the view of God, *lost*. And when he who came to seek and to save, was seen dying for all, they felt that "all were dead." They feel so still. The doctrine of all human depravity, as revealed in the Bible, appears to them a reality; and it appears to be as universal and entire, as God represents.

2. God has revealed that this is a state of guilt and of ruin. "Thou hast destroyed thyself." "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is also doubted by some, and by others is denied. But the Holy Ghost teaches real Christians, that they *have* "loved darkness rather than light;" that their deeds have been evil; that they have sinned against heaven and before God. They feel that they deserve to perish; and that unless they are, through grace, delivered from sin, they must perish. Hence instead of crying, Peace, peace, and trying to cast the blame of the wickedness upon Adam, or upon God, they take it to themselves; and they feel that it belongs to them. "Father, I have sinned," "Lord, I am vile," "Pardon *mine* iniquity, for it is great."

3. God has revealed, that without a change, a great

moral change, which he calls "being born again," no man can be saved. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Heaven." Real Christians know this also to be a fact. The Holy Ghost, by means of the truth, has given them such a view of themselves and of God, that they no longer marvel that men must be born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Men have carnal minds, which are "enmity against God." And what can enmity against God do in heaven? "Into that place entereth nothing that defileth." But men are naturally defiled. "The Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand, and seek him," but they are gone aside, they are altogether become filthy, "there is none that doeth good, no not one." Hence, they must be changed; or, in the language of the Bible, be "Born of the Spirit," or they "cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Real Christians feel this. They know, that he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into their hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence they see,

4. The reality of another truth which God has revealed, "In me is thine help. I, even I, am Jehovah, and besides me there is no Saviour." In days of impenitence and unbelief they may have sought help from others; but never found it. They never found it till they felt, and that deeply, that it must come from God; and when they did find it, they were the first to cry, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "By grace are we saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Some trust

to works; the goodness of God, out of Christ; and some hope to be saved, because they think themselves of too much importance to perish. But these are all refuges of lies; and however long Christians in days of their impenitence, may have trusted to them, and however firmly they may have thought such hopes to stand; they have all been swept away. In view of this subject I remark,—

1. That true religion begins with *experience*. It is experience, however, not of any thing enthusiastic, delusive, or uncertain, but of the reality and power of these truths which God has revealed. And this experience gives them a kind of knowledge of those truths, as to their reality, and efficacy, and importance, which before they did not have. Some men doubt whether there is any such religious experience. The reason is they have never felt it. The same general reasons lead some men to doubt the truths of the Bible; they have never felt them. Yet the Bible is true; and let a man feel its efficacy, and he will know that religious experience is a reality; a momentous and glorious reality. “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” But we learn from this subject,

2. That this peculiar kind of knowledge which real Christians have, is taught them, not merely by men, but by the Holy Ghost. It is not a knowledge which they gain *merely*, by seeing, or hearing, or thinking. They do not obtain this knowledge in any way, by the unaided efforts of their own minds. These are all means, and must be used; but it is the Holy One who imparts this knowledge to men. Flesh and blood do not reveal it; nor does any sinful or finite spirit; but the Holy Ghost. It is by “an unction from the Holy One” that they receive this knowledge. This is doubted by some; not, however, by those who receive the truth. They know things, which, they are perfectly convinced, they never should have known, had not

the Holy Ghost taught them the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart; its enmity against God; its guilt in disobeying him; the necessity of being born again; that there is no hope for sinners but in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that none to whom he is revealed can be saved except they believe on him; his infinite fullness, divine excellence, and beauty and loveliness as a Saviour; the blessedness of believing on him, trusting in him, and obeying his commands, are truths which all real Christians know; but which they are deeply sensible that they never should have known, had not the Holy Ghost taught them. The teaching of the Holy Ghost is attended with a twofold effect, it gives to those who receive it an experimental knowledge of divine truth; attended with a permanent conviction that this knowledge is from God.

3. We see, in view of this subject, the reason why children and poor persons; persons of little learning and small abilities, sometimes embrace the Gospel; appear clearly to understand it, and deeply to feel its truths. It is because the Holy Ghost can and does teach them as really as others. The truths of the Gospel are adapted to their condition, and exactly meet their wants. They can understand them. The reason is, the glorious "Gospel of God our Saviour," is adapted, not only to adult sinners, or learned sinners, or sinners of great talents; but to sinners of every class.

And man, in every condition in which he is a sinner in a state of probation, and feels his need of pardoning mercy, is able to understand the Gospel, and is able to embrace it, and to be begotten again by it, unto a lively hope, which shall purify him even as God is pure. And this is one of the precious glories of the Gospel. It is adapted to sinners of every sort, and *whosoever* will, may embrace it. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Whosoever will, let him come; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

J. EDWARDS, D.D.

WHERE ART THOU ?

Genesis iii. 9.—"*Where art thou ?*"

THE blessed God thus addressed the first human transgressor. "The voice of the Lord God was heard walking in the garden, in the cool of the day,"—it was the very day of the fall, for sin never fails to draw after it a quick retribution; and the Lord had come down to go the rounds of man's new abode, and see what he was about. But Adam fled at his approach; guilt could not abide His coming; fear seized upon him, and he hid himself. God found that sinner in a sad condition; guilty, afraid, trembling, wholly unprepared to meet His righteous Judge; and fearful was the sentence pronounced against him. So God will reckon with every sinner. He will search out and punish every guilty soul. Think not to sin and escape. God may long delay, and seem to overlook wickedness; justice may slumber and damnation be restrained; but the hour of retribution will come at last to each and to all; and it will be an hour of dismay, and trembling, and hopeless doom to the impenitent and unforgiven. For every man has a moral character and position of his own; and though he may fail to perceive

it and the world be ignorant of it, it is clearly defined in the sight of God, and perfectly understood by Him. The Omniscient eye beholds at this moment the actual character and habitation of each individual being. The Lord God is walking to and fro in the earth, as in the garden of old, to see what is done, to look after the erring, to awake the sleeper, to surprise the hypocrite, and make inquisition for neglect and transgression. He passes by the sinner in His word, or comes to him in some startling providence, and cries in his ear, "Where art thou? His voice is heard by the Christian, demanding an account of himself, repentance for sins committed, a return to duty, holy living, and a readiness for the reckoning hour.

And where is the professing *Christian* to day, while God is seeking him out in the sanctuary? It is easy to say where you *ought* to be, but alas, we fear that many of you will not be found there.

And 1. The Christian ought always to be at his proper and assigned *work*. He has a peculiar and important work to perform. It is the work of salvation, of repentance and faith, of holy living and serving God. It is the work of prayer, of inward conflicts with corruption, and striving against the world, the flesh, and the devil; the work of warning and entreating sinners to flee from the wrath to come; the work of imitating the example, and obeying the Gospel, and advancing the kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth. There is no work so needful, so solemn and responsible as this; none, the neglect of which is attended with consequences so serious and lasting. It is a "high calling" in which the Christian is made "a spectacle unto the world, even to angels and to men." And God fails not to mark every dereliction, to note every hour, every gift and power not given to the work of salvation; and soon will he reckon with every labourer, and reward or punish, according as they have been diligent or negligent.

2. The Christian ought ever to be in his proper *place*.

Whoever he be, and whatever his gifts, or station or circumstances in life, there is a place assigned him in the mind and providence of God ; and none can fill that place so well as he ; and he ought to seek it, and stand in his lot ; he shrinks from it or abandons it at the peril of his salvation. He has his own place in the family circle, in the church of Christ, in every sphere of Christian duty and enterprise, and in the world of guilt, and misery, and ignorance around him. He has his own place in the hour for private devotion, on the Sabbath, and during each day of the week ; a proper place as a creature of God, and a sinner seeking life ; as a disciple of the Divine Teacher ; as a servant of the Lord who bought him ; as a steward entrusted with many talents ; as a frail and dying mortal hastening to judgment and eternity. And for such an one to be found out of his place in the day of God's visitation, to have run uncalled, or refused when bidden, or to have vacated his post untold, will be dreadful indeed.

3. The Christian ought ever to be *in a state of mind* to seek the divine blessing. While in the line of duty, busy at his work, and radiating his sphere with the light of holy example, and pious precept, his heart *will* go to God in earnest desire, and his approbation and love will be the joy of existence, a blessed reward. But alas ! sin cherished, or duty neglected, not only loses us the favour of God, but what is, if possible, worse still, robs us of the disposition to desire or seek it. How many, for this reason, are serving God from constraint and not from choice ! To how many is religion a task, and the service of Christ a weariness, and prayer itself anything but a pleasure, because they engage in what they know to be wrong, or pursue their worldly business in a selfish and prayerless spirit, or enter into schemes of gain, or pleasure, or alliances in trade, or politics, or friendship, which the holy God cannot sanction ; or they live so far away from Christ, and so aside from

Christian duty in their whole spirit and course of conduct, as to be utter strangers to the joy and confidence of faith ; to walk in perpetual darkness and fear, and be "as the mountains of Gilboa" unrefreshed by rain or dew, sterile and desolate.

4. The Christian ought ever to be *where he can meet God in judgment without fear*. To Him you must give account of all life's doings ; and you know not how soon, nor how suddenly the summons may come for you. Others are dying around you, and passing away from earthly scenes and quickly your and my last hour will have come. If you ever repent of your sins and adjust your accounts for the final day, you must do it without delay. If you really mean to die in peace, you must live for that hour and end, and maintain habits of daily piety. Failing to do this, to how many is the hour of God's judgment the hour of fearful surprise, a terrible alarm, a withering rebuke ! "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

The *sinner* has a character no less his own,—a moral habitation, distinct and defined to the eye of God. "Where art thou ? Every sinner is *where he ought not to be*,—in a false position as it respects God and truth, duty and salvation ; and retaining his present character and place, he is sure to be undone for ever. *He is in his sins*, he has never repented of them, nor forsaken them. They invest him with a character which challenges the abhorrence of God and angels ; they tower round his path like Alpine heights of guilt and corruption ; every one of them has a voice which cries to heaven for judgment ; and if he is not rid of them, they will sink him into perdition with the weight of a mighty millstone. *He is in the pathway of eternal ruin*. His feet take hold on death. He is pursuing a career which ends in destruction. He is rushing with fury in his heart to the doom of the incorrigible. He is defying the wrath

and despising the mercy of the great God. And persisting in this course, he will soon have passed the limits of Divine forbearance, and sealed his eternal doom in hell.

He is in a state of awful condemnation. His sins have already found him out. The penalty of a violated law hangs over him. Conscience foreshadows the coming wrath. The chains of fear, and guilt, and misery, are woven by him. Heaven is out against his wickedness. The just and merciful God is against him, and the day of doom and vengeance is not distant.

He wanders in a land of darkness and gloom. Where the sinner is, the sweet light of day never comes; the voice of hope and peace is never heard; the notes of pardoning mercy never break on the ear and rejoice the heart. It is a region of sadness and gloom; the land of the shadow of death. Evil spirits walk it; dismal sounds are heard in it; and death and despair reign over it. The soul that dwells here finds no inward peace, dark thoughts fill the mind, evil passions rage, and all within and around is blight, and dreariness, and wretchedness.

The sinner, finally, is ever *under God's immediate eye*. He saw the first sinner when he took and ate of the forbidden fruit; He saw all his conduct, and knew all his thoughts during the hours which succeeded the transgressions; He saw what fear, and shame, and conscious guilt seized upon him at his approach; and he saw him in his hiding place, vainly seeking to escape from pursuing Justice. God sees each one of these hearers, sees every sinner in all his ways. He sees him in secret, when he is bold to sin because no visible eye is upon him; and in the night watches, when he hopes the darkness will veil his evil deeds. He sees him in his Family, in the sanctuary, and during the business hours of each day; in all his plans of gain and over-reaching, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in his thoughtful hours and merry moods, the eye of God is upon him; it reads his inmost thoughts and spieth out all his ways.

He is in the hands of an angry God. He is in the power of Him whose arm spans the universe, and crushes worlds in the day of His wrath. He is at the disposal of One whose every favour has been slighted, whose mercy has been perverted, and whose justice has been insulted. But let that mighty Being, but speak the word, and the daring worm ceases to be ! What a position to be in ! Merciful God ! put forth thy hand, not in wrath to crush, but in mercy to save the creatures whom thou hast made !

W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

JOSHUA'S DYING TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

Joshua xxiii. 14. — “ *And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth ; and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you ; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.*”

THESE are the words of Joshua in the immediate prospect of closing his earthly course. His had been an eventful life, but the most important existence must come to an end. He now takes a solemn farewell of the assembled tribes, assuring them that he should not be much longer permitted to superintend their concerns, as he had hitherto done. He speaks of his approaching departure with great tranquillity ; and appeals to their consciences as to the divine veracity and faithfulness. The blessed God had promised, on the death of Moses, that the people should take possession of

Canaan; and on Joshua was devolved the partition of the land according to the several tribes. This difficult duty had now been accomplished, and the wise and judicious Leader, having finished his onerous labours, was daily awaiting his dismissal to rest. All that the Lord had spoken had come to pass; and not one thing had failed of all the good things which He had promised concerning them. With this high and noble testimony to the faithfulness of God, he could bid them a happy farewell. It is an encouraging instance of the divine goodness, and shews that they who trust in the Lord while pursuing the path of duty shall never be ashamed. It is also a pleasing representation of the calm and holy feeling with which a good man may look upon death when his work is done.

In meditating upon the text we notice the following particulars which it suggests.

I. *Death is a way.* The description is instructive. "I am going the way of all the earth," says the venerable servant of the Lord. Death is a way, not an end. It conducts us to another state of being: from a state of probation to one of retribution: from the desert to the paradise; from the howling wilderness of sin and sorrow, to the sacred and holy city of God.

There are many cheering thoughts associated with this reflection. Death is generally contemplated as a dreaded enemy; and to nature it is a terrible foe. But to the "Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile," and who, like Joshua, the captain of the Lord's hosts, "follows the Lord fully," it is a friend. It leads him from the means and streams of religious ordinances, to the fountain head of living waters; from the society of earthly, and at best, imperfect connections, to the company of triumphant saints, to an innumerable multitude of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all. Some have taken long journeys, and encountered many dangers with no small

expense, for the honour of an introduction to the great and distinguished. But no honour is comparable to that which awaits the Christian traveller at the end of his way. He will then be introduced to the society of heaven,—a society, perfect in knowledge, and refined from all the impurities of the flesh. And hence, as there is no moral defilement there is no discord. Once there, we shall see eye to eye : and our joy will be full.

II. Death is a way, *that all must go*. In all human arrangements, there are exceptions to established rules. But there are no exceptions here. It is “the way of all the earth”—of persons of all ranks, of all countries, of all kindreds, and of all attainments. All must go, whether willing or unwilling, prepared or unprepared, when the day arrives. They who forget God, and live wickedly, must go this way. Resistance to the inevitable decree will be utterly fruitless. Some journies may be deferred, and postponed a week, a month, a year; and perhaps be wholly declined. But this cannot be put off or avoided. Many would wish to grow young again ; and where the feeling arises from a sincere desire, were it possible, to correct the errors and escape the snares into which they have fallen—it is not reprehensible. It may not however be. The king of terrors can neither be bought nor beaten off from his stern purpose. Means may be used. It is sinful to neglect medical advice when it may be had. But there is no cure for mortality save that which He, “who is the resurrection and the life” shall give, when He comes to judge the quick and the dead at the last day. The sentence is unrepealed : “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Many a brave soldier has returned from the battle field sound in life and limb, while thousands as brave as he, have fallen by his side. But there is no discharge in this war. We must needs die.

III. Death is a way which we *may soon be required to take*. “I am this day going,” says Joshua in the text. For anything we know, the journey may be near at hand ;

only a step between us and death. We are not authorized to speak with the certainty of the Commander of Israel as in the case before us, but we have manifold monitors of the brevity and uncertainty of our earthly course. The events of providence and the attacks of sickness all around are continually calling our attention to this one thing. Our days are but a span, an inch or two of time. Life is but a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. Numbers are cut down by sudden death; and found dead in the morning—sleeping to awake no more till the trumpet of the judgment shall sound to arouse them from their dusty beds. To many who are dreaming of years of ease, the Judge saith—“this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” And he that goes this way returns no more to mingle in the scenes he has left. Thus Job asks—“Are not my days few? cease then and let me alone that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return.” Of the thousands that die daily, not one comes back to tell us of the end of his journey.

Here we pause; and from what has been said, we would draw this one solemn and most important truth—If all must die—if death may come at an hour we think not of—if it be an event that cannot be overruled or repeated, then it is a question of the most weighty consequence, *whether we are prepared to meet it?* It will be too late to seek for oil wherewith to trim our lamps, when the bridegroom cometh.

Does any one ask for information with respect to the nature of this preparation? We have the most explicit answers in the words of our Lord. He says—“Whosoever believeth in me shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” The complete atonement of Christ received and trusted in, disarms death of its sting, silences the curse of the law, and brings us into the enjoyment of peace and reconciliation with God. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” In this faith the venerable Simeon

embraced the infant Saviour, and in a strain of holy exultation exclaimed—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." The soul committed to the hands of the Redeemer will be kept till the day of his final return.

But that faith which unites us with Him is an holy principle. It worketh by love. It overcomes the world. It is allied with all the graces of the Holy Spirit, and is one of the most prominent and necessary. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." And while they who believe, are justified freely from all things, they are not thence inclined to sin that grace may abound. "Faith without works" as its evidence and fruits, "is dead, being alone." The stronger our faith, the more holy will be our life.

There may be a meetness of state, when there is no readiness of mind and feeling. In the general acceptation of the term, every Christian who has found mercy, and who reposes on the Saviour alone for eternal life, is prepared to die. Yet he may shudder at the prospect, and "fear to launch away." All have not the same degree of assurance. Some live in bondage through fear of death. Others are full of hope, and waiting with earnest desire for the hour of their departure. Some die rejoicing—others are full of distressing anticipations with reference to their final acceptance. But let none presume—let none despair. The kingdom of heaven is opened to all believers; and the most feeble saint shall enter its gates as safely and as surely as the most vigorous and confiding of the redeemed.

This sentiment is confirmed by the testimony of Joshua to the faithfulness of God. He appeals to the experience of the assembled tribes, that not one thing had failed of all that the Lord God had spoken concerning them. He is still the same, He changeth not. He has been better to us than our fears. He has often exceeded not only our expectations, but His own promises. In the day of trouble He has heard our cry, and answered us. If the temptation

has not been removed, it has been moderated, and He has given strength to bear it. The cloud which for a long season darkened your path, has gradually vanquished, and the sun has again smiled upon you.

Let us therefore thank God and take courage. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." And however our faith and patience may be tried, as we travel through the wilderness, we shall gain our rest at last in the presence of God and the Lamb.

Now to God, etc.

ISAAC BACKUS, D.D.

THE TRINITY EMPLOYED IN MAN'S REDEMPTION.

Acts ii., 33.—*"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."*

THESE words are a part of the address which was delivered by the Apostles to the assembled multitudes on the day of Pentecost. The text contains a concise but lucid explanation of the wondrous event which was then being witnessed, in the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, who now spake with divers tongues, as that Divine Spirit gave them utterance. The passage sets forth the salvation of man as the work of the Trinity; shews the part of each person of the Trinity in its performance, and the necessity and harmony of the plan of redemption thus

effected. Let us take a brief view of these particulars, in accordance with the appointment of the Church, for this day's consideration.

I. The salvation of man is the work of the Triune Jehovah,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. These three are here evidently engaged in its accomplishment. The Father gives the Son, the Son sends the Holy Spirit, and is not sent by Him. The Holy Ghost is sent, or as it is expressed in the Litany,—“proceeds from the Father and the Son,” and does not send the Father nor the Son. It is scarcely possible to conceive how any distinction of persons can be more plainly expressed.

When the law was to be repeated to Israel, the Lord said, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is *one* Lord.” *One* in distinction from the idols of the heathen, who had lords many and gods many; *one*, as an object of simple, supreme and undivided worship; *one*, as demanding exclusive allegiance and subjection; *one* living and true God, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, having an existence in a Trinity of persons, co-equal, co-eternal, and in all divine perfections essentially one and the same.

The creation was the result of divine counsel in the Trinity. “And God said, Let *us* make man.” When the creature thus formed of the dust of the earth had fallen from his pristine purity and obedience, his redemption from the curse of the law he had broken was the consequence of a “council of peace,” which was holden by the Godhead. The Father asserts the claims of the Divine Law, the Son accepts the penalty, the Holy Spirit, by an efficiency peculiarly divine, prepares many sons unto glory. Here each performs a separate office. The law must be asserted—it cannot yield. The eternal Father upholds, maintains, indicates it. The Son takes the sinner's place under the law, and the substitution is accepted. The Holy Ghost prepares the heart for the reception and love of the truth, and is God the Sanctifier. Thus we see, as set forth in

the text, the salvation of lost and condemned sinners is the work of God in the Trinity. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He," that is Jesus, "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

II. Let us now glance more explicitly to the part which each of the sacred Three performs in the work of man's redemption. The law enjoining obedience had been prescribed to man by the one only living and true God. This law having been violated, the Lawgiver must enforce the penalty of its violation, which was temporal and eternal death. If mercy is extended, it must not be at the expense of justice ; truth must be maintained ; and the depraved and rebellious heart purified and subdued.

A threefold service is thus required. The law must be upheld and guarded from dishonour. Man needs a substitute—he must have a Redeemer and an Advocate, or die—he must be renewed and sanctified, or be excluded from heaven. To meet the case, the Father undertakes for the law, Christ the eternal Son undertakes for the sinner, and the Holy Spirit for the execution of the dispensation of grace. Thus the whole is represented—the law, the sinner and the sanctification that makes us meet for heaven.

There are no conflicting interests here. The blessed God loves mercy as well as justice, and never urges the latter to the prejudice of the former. Christ loves justice as well as mercy. We dishonour the Father and the Son if we suppose that the one was all wrath, and the other all mildness and mercy. The Holy Spirit applies to the soul the benefit of the Saviour's mediation. In this plan the Father performs a work separate from the Son, and which the Son does not perform. The Son performs a work which the Father does not perform. The Holy Spirit performs a work different and distinct from both. And yet whatever is performed by the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit, is properly and strictly the work of God, harmoniously

approved and sanctioned in the divine mind. It is thus stated in the sacred Scriptures,—“Mercy and truth have met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”

Is justice asserted ? It is God. Is mercy dispensed ? It is God. Is a sinner saved ? It is the work of God. Is the law administered ? It is the work of God. Is an atonement made for sin ? It is Christ that died. Is a righteousness provided by which believers are justified ? It is Christ who has wrought it. Is the enmity of the heart destroyed ? It is God the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to convince of sin. Does man repent and sue for mercy ? It is the grace of the Spirit that has taken away the heart of stone and given an heart of flesh. Does the man who was once dead in trespasses and sins now walk in newness of life, comforted and edified, sustained under trials, strengthened in the inner man, growing in grace and in the knowledge of God his Saviour ? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Does the dying Christian triumph in death, anticipating a joyful resurrection to eternal life ? It is the work of the same agency. “For if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

But could not this work—the redemption and salvation of man—have been effected without a Trinity of persons in the Godhead ? We should speak with great caution and reverence when we undertake to say what God cannot do, and of what it is necessary for Him to do. Yet there are matters concerning Him in which we may speak with confidence and decision. He cannot do wrong. He cannot deny Himself. He can in no wise clear the impenitent and guilty. He cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. It is necessary that His law should be maintained. If the sinner be saved it is necessary that it should be in a way that displays and secures the integrity of justice, while it

confers pardon. And in order to the enjoyment of His smile, and the happiness of heaven, it is necessary that we be born again—renewed in the spirit of our mind—putting on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of God. These things we may affirm with all certainty.

But are we warranted to adopt the same confidence with respect to the question before us? Now we must reason in this case from what we know. We are not in so many words informed in Scripture that man could not have been redeemed and saved but by a Trinity of persons in the Godhead. We must however bear in mind that the blessed God is infinitely wise ; that He does nothing needlessly ; that what He does, it becomes and behoves Him to do ; and that any course He pursues, is not only the best, but the only one that appears proper to His infinite mind. These are self-evident propositions ; and on their truthfulness we may construct an answer to the enquiry in question, that seeing a Trinity is engaged in man's salvation, a Trinity was necessary to its execution and accomplishment. All other theories are inadequate, imperfect, unsafe. They are not to be trusted in, nor relied upon. The brand of antagonism to Scripture is on their brow. They take some part of the work from the hands of God, and commit it to a creature of weakness and guilt.

III. Let us glance, in conclusion, to the beauty and harmony of this doctrine. Clashing as the interests may seem to be, there is no discord. When mercy cannot proceed against justice, God the Son satisfies that justice, and opens a way for mercy to proceed. When mercy cannot proceed against the hardness and corruption of the heart, God the Holy Spirit enlightens the conscience, convicts, softens, and changes the moral nature, and brings man to love and serve, and submit to God. When eternal ruin hung over the destiny of the whole human race, under the administration of a violated law, this plan of redemption

was matured in the council of the divine Trinity. The Father consented to deliver up the son a substitute for sinners: the son consented to yield his life a ransom for their deliverance from the curse; and the Holy Spirit became the efficient agent in bringing home to the minds of sinners, dark, depraved, and lost, the power of the truth. Thus we see harmony established where everything appeared discordant and hopeless.

The beauty of the doctrine pre-eminently appears in its adaptation and efficiency to produce its end—an end of the highest glory to God, and benevolence to man. It saves sinners—saves them, though under the sentence of an immutable law, inflicting on the disobedient and unbelieving an eternal penalty—saves them in consistency with divine justice, and the integrity of the divine character. Here is moral beauty, which Almighty power and wisdom alone could create, and which could originate only in the conceptions of the infinite mind.

Here is a subject, sufficient for wonder, love, and praise, throughout eternity. Who would mar the beauty, or interrupt the harmony of this doctrine? Let him first furnish, as a substitute, another plan of salvation equally glorious, consistent with itself, and equally supported by the plain and unperverted testimonies of the Bible. Before he removes the corner-stone, on which I build my eternal hope, let him shew me one equally beautiful, more rational as a ground of trust, and better supported by the Word of God. This he can never do. That scheme which removes the mystery of the Trinity from the plan of salvation, disrobes that plan of its principal moral beauty, destroys the harmonious action of the moral government of God, for one mystery substitutes greater mysteries, and utterly obscures the sun, which enlightens my path to the mercy seat. The doctrine is the central luminary of the Christian system, the source of light and heat, motion and life, to the worlds of mind within its sphere, which it holds in their orbit and

controls. Blot it out, and you throw us back on the night of paganism, to the mere religion of nature, the dim twilight of heathen philosophy. We will say then with St. Paul, "Great is the mystery of godliness ; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

Thus we see the glorious and blessed Trinity, employed in the work of man's redemption. We see all the divine perfections of a Being infinitely perfect, united in a work of infinite benevolence. How vast in importance and magnitude must be the salvation of a soul for which such an outlay was made ! How gratefully should we embrace the scheme of mercy thus revealed and urged on our acceptance ! May God the Spirit enable us to do so !

K. W. BAILEY.

THE CROWNED REDEEMER.

Rev. xix. 12.—"*And on his head were many crowns.*"

WHEN we read of the Saviour's sufferings on the cross, we ought not to confine our thoughts to the torture of crucifixion. He might have been crucified without enduring the agony of the garden—without having been betrayed by one disciple, denied by another, and deserted by the rest. The Jewish rulers might have satiated their envy without the scenes of the pretorium, without arraying him so gorgeously in derision of his claims as a king ; without the mockery of a bloodthirsty mob ; and without having his sacred temples punctured by a crown of thorns. All these are circumstances which greatly aggravate the barbarous scene, and give it a fearful prominence in the annals of suffering sustained by the innocent and good. But his

murderers are not satisfied with his blood. He must wear the crown of thorns, and bear the insults of the malignant spirits of darkness.

Cruel was this act of his foes. What had He done to deserve it? He had strained his superhuman powers to bless and save the world. And yet here he is, with all the sensibilities of human nature in lively exercise, with the same kind of flesh and blood, of nerves and fibres, that you and I possess, bleeding, agonizing, under a crown of thorns; and even this was only a drop in the flood of anguish which was constituted by the whole scene in all its preparatory and attending circumstances!

But there was *contempt* as well as cruelty implied in putting this crown upon his head. It is far easier to bear bodily suffering than reproach and ignominy; but in the crown of thorns there was involved not less of the latter than of the former. Jesus had without the semblance of ostentation, and yet with the conscious dignity of truth, declared himself a king; and hence they array him in mock majesty, and put a crown of thorns on his head, in derision of the authority which he claimed, and pass before him, bowing the knee and insultingly casting his own words into his teeth. Never was there so much of ignominy heaped upon any other being. The ingenuity of hell itself was tasked to make that man of sorrows appear unworthy of a place on God's footstool; and when he sunk at last into the arms of death, he sunk under a burden of ignominious torture.

Such was "the crown of thorns" which Jesus wore on Calvary; let us now pass from a consideration of this to a view of the "*many crowns*" which he now wears in heaven. When the beloved disciple saw him in his glorified state, he declares that "on his head were many crowns."

It is evident from the connexion in which these words occur, that they refer rather to his mediatorial dominion than to his absolute and original proprietorship of all things.

As God the Creator, God the Preserver, God the universal Sovereign, well may the whole creation crown him Lord of All; but that there is particular reference in this passage to His mediatorial glory, is evident from the fact that He is here called by the peculiar names by which Christ as Mediator is designated; such as the "Faithful and True," and, especially, "the Word of God;" and moreover, the whole scene which is here described seems to recognise him exclusively in His mediatorial dignity. What then, more particularly, are we to understand, by His having upon His head "many crowns."

It implies that He has the whole creation in subjection to His authority; that every thing lives, and moves, and acts, as the effect of His will; that every event is rendered tributary to His purposes, and every creature is made to minister to His glory.

Look abroad upon *this earth*, and you behold nothing but what is included in the Mediator's dominion. When you see imprisoned nature bursting from the grave of winter into the bloom and melody of spring; when you see the golden harvest falling before the reaper's sickle; when you view the mountain proudly lifting itself among the clouds; when the thunders roll and the lightnings play around you; when the cattle sport themselves on a thousand hills, and the air as well as the earth seems teeming with a busy population; not one but according to its nature is rendered subservient to His will. The conflicts of nations, the convulsions of empires, the pestilence that stalks through the world, the earthquake that swallows up cities, all seem to be adverse to the purposes of Messiah's reign; and yet they are part of the instrumentality by which He is accomplishing the vast designs of His government; they are all, under His direction, tending to a result by which His mediatorial glory will be completely illustrated. He has the hearts of all men in His hand; of all good men, and of all wicked men; and while by His grace He constrains the

former to do His will, by His wisdom and His power He renders the latter also instrumental of promoting His glory. Even those who fight against His cause are compelled to become tributary to its interests; the wrath of man He causes to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains.

Next fasten your eyes upon *these visible heavens*; upon this magnificent arch above you, in which you behold the sun by day and the moon and the stars by night; especially contemplate the evening sky, apparently studded with innumerable gems, but really peopled with an infinity of worlds, each of which performs its stated revolution, while all move together in perpetual and unbroken concert; and here again you have discovered nothing so vast but that it is moved by the Mediator's will. What the character of the inhabitants of those worlds may be, or what revelations of divine wisdom may be made to them, we know not; but we *do* know, from the lively oracles, that they belong to the dominion of the Son of God.

And now let faith penetrate beyond the range of mortal vision, to *the region of immortal life and glory*, where there is no need of the sun nor of the moon, for the Lord God is the light thereof; and there, too, does the Mediator exercise His dominion; for there every heart beats in unison with His will, every tongue is ready, and every harp is strung, to show forth His praise. If you will know the loyalty of the ransomed and the glorified to their King, listen to that report which an eye-witness made of His visit to the heavenly city: "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and blessing!"

The Mediator's reign, then, is absolutely universal. Not

the most magnificent globe that sweeps through immensity, nor the brightest seraph in heaven, nor the blackest fiend in hell; not the grandest or the most insignificant event that ever occurs in any world; is without the range of His empire. In reference to the splendour and the perpetuity of such a reign, may He not well be represented as wearing many crowns?

Such sufferings as the Redeemer experienced when the crown of thorns pierced His head, could never have been inflicted upon such a personage as He was, but for the accomplishment of some mighty purpose; never could have been inflicted upon Him under the government of a wise and righteous God, but in consideration of their being followed by some glorious reward. And this is just in accordance with fact as it is stated by the prophet Isaiah: "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

It is because He died in ignominy upon the cross, that He has had all things put under His feet, because He received meekly and calmly the crown of thorns, that those many crowns, radiant with countless gems of glory, now glitter, and are destined for ever to glitter, upon His head.

And now, let me ask, *what Christian among you all would desire to go to heaven on a flowery bed of ease?* This was not the way in which Jesus gained possession of His many crowns; nor is it the way in which those who profess to be His disciples should desire to be led on to their final reward. Oh, brethren, methinks our subject consecrates every scene of trouble. Methinks it consecrates the Christian's death bed, and the Christian mourner's weeds, and every heaving of the bosom which grief occasions in this vale of sorrow. For, Christian sufferer, those tears of thine are a seed which are destined to yield a harvest of glory! Thou art travelling upward to a world where songs shall

take the place of groans ; and a crown of life shall mark thee as an eternal conqueror. Be still, then, though thou art bending in anguish, to catch the last whisper of thy dearest friend. Be still, though thou art just going down into the dark valley ; for this momentary tempest is the harbinger of a serene eternity. Surely thou mayest afford to be still, when Jesus, thy Saviour, calmly endured the crown of thorns.

And, finally, our subject supplies us with a *most appropriate theme to take with us to the sacramental table*. Christians, meditate upon the crown of thorns. Meditate upon the many crowns. Meditate upon the one as the glorious consequence of the other. And if you do this in a proper manner, you will kindle into brighter exercise ; your hope in God's gracious covenant will grow stronger ; and perhaps the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory may fill and satisfy your soul. Join, then, ye ransomed saints, while you are assembled to commemorate your Redeemer's death, while you have the crown of thorns and the many crowns before the eye of your faith—join, in exercise of devout gratitude, join, in anticipation of the joys of His presence—one and all, join, to crown Him Lord of the Creation !

W. B. SPRAGUE, D.D.

THE ADORABLE SAVIOUR.

Hebrews i. 6.—“ *And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith—And let all the angels of God worship Him.*”

How fully this prediction of the homage which the Saviour would receive at His incarnation, was fulfilled, the Evangelist St. Luke minutely records. He tells us, that first of all an Angel appeared to certain shepherds who were keep-

ing watch over their flock by night, and announced to them the birth of a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. While giving them directions where to find Him,—“ suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Thus we see, that “ the testimony of the Lord is sure.”

The sum of the gospel is the Saviour :—the Saviour in the fulness of his grace, and the perfection of His glories. The richest gems it contains were designed to adorn and beautify for ever the crowns He wears. And if we love Him, we shall love, also, to gather them up again and again, and plant them anew on His brow, in order to gain fresh views of His divine beauty and excellence. That He is God, absolutely, essentially, and supremely God, we fully believe ; and in this belief is our chief joy. Were it gone, our hope in His name would have no strength left as an “ anchor of the soul ;” and we could not sing the song in which so many have chanted their way to heaven ; “ Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid ; for Jehovah, Jehovah is my strength and my song ; He also is become my salvation.”

Let me now request you to accompany me in the consideration of the argument for the Saviour’s divinity furnished in the text.

I. *The worship*, which the Scriptures uniformly describe as His due, and uniformly describe as paid to Him by all ranks of intelligent creatures. While we glance at this subject, may He whose honour we would vindicate, enable us rightly to understand and improve it !

It is an axiom in theology, and needs no proof, that worship should be rendered to none but God ; and that none can rightfully receive it, but He who knows Himself to be God. “ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God ; and Him *only* shalt thou serve,” is the voice of revelation. If then we find the Scriptures constantly holding up the Saviour

as a being who is *to be worshipped*, and who *always has been* worshipped by men and angels best acquainted with His character, what follows—what must follow, but that Christ is recognised in the Scriptures as Divine?

Now, what are the facts in the case? How was He regarded when on earth, by those who best knew His character, and best knew the will of Heaven concerning the measure of honour He should receive? “We have seen His star in the East, and have *come to worship Him*,” said the wise men, who had been conducted by divine guidance from a far country, to render Him their homage, while He was a babe in the manger:—and what they had come to do, they did. “When they saw the young child, they fell down, and *worshipped Him*; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts—gold and frankincense, and myrrh.”

When He had finished His sermon on the mount, and was come down, “behold there came a leper and *worshipped Him*, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” And was he reprovèd by the Saviour, for thus paying Him divine honours? So far from it, that immediately “Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, *I will; be thou clean*. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” It were easy to multiply instances—We could point to the worship rendered to our Lord by the man to whom He had given sight,—by the woman of Canaan, by Mary Magdalene and the other Mary,—and by the eleven disciples after His resurrection, all of which He received as His righteous due, and well pleasing in His sight.

Such was the homage paid Him, by His friends and followers when on earth,—but it is permitted us to draw aside the curtain of heaven, and gaze upon the glorified throng who, with one voice shout, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing!” Where, I would ask, is that creature in all the universe of God, which

is not described as speaking and acting here ? And in what service is it, that all unite ? What holy purpose, what sacred duty is it, that can thus engage every creature in all worlds, around, above, and below, in such a sympathy and concert as we here witness ? It is the worship of Jesus. The Lamb that was slain is thus recognised as meriting and receiving divine homage and praise, from all creatures that are able to give it.

But while Christ thus freely and invariably accepts the expressions of homage from all creatures ; and thus, as we say, avows himself to be “ God over all, blessed for ever,” our argument may be strengthened by showing,

II. How invariably angels and holy men have refused worship, when offered to them :—men refusing it, on the ground that they were men, and not God ; thus showing that worship should be rendered to God alone, and that God alone could receive it ; and angels also refusing it on the same principle.

When Cornelius, the centurion, had been directed by an angel of God to send for Peter, who should “ tell him what he ought to do,” “ as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and *worshipped* him ;” just as the apostle had seen men honour his Saviour, in the instances we have adduced. But what does Peter do and say ? Does he receive the worship thus proffered to him ? No ! “ Peter took him by the hand, saying, stand up, I myself also am a man :”

When at Lystra, Paul healed a man impotent in his feet, a cripple from his birth ; and when the people, seeing what he had done, “ lifted up their voices, saying, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men ;” and “ the priest brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people ;” how did the apostles act ? Did they suffer the proposed worship and homage to be rendered to them ? Shocked at the very idea, “ they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, “ Sirs,

why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

Equally prompt and decided are *angels* in refusing worship, when it has been tendered to them. When John, in the view given him of the heavenly world, was so overpowered with its glories, as set before him by those who talked with him, that he "fell at the angel's feet to worship him,"—what was the reply from that bright and sinless messenger of heaven? High and exalted as he was, he would receive no homage, but at once admonished the bewildered and erring apostle, that God, and God alone, was to be worshipped by His creatures. And as the expression of homage was twice offered to him by John twice does he promptly reply, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book; worship God."

One instance indeed, there is on the sacred page, that a proud, and profligate man, *did* receive worship, *did* allow himself to be approached and hailed as God, and seemed to have complacency in the proffered honour. "On a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration to them of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to desire peace" at his hands. And as he there, in all the pride of authority and pomp, "made an oration to them, the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a God, and not of man." But the triumph of the wicked is short; for "immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, *because he gave not God the glory*; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." The corruption of the grave, fastening itself upon him before the eyes of the multitude, while he was yet robed in royal apparel, and while the acclamations of his gazing worshippers had scarce died upon his ear.

Such is the strong and thrilling testimony of the Bible,

that worship can be rendered to none but God, without incurring the rebuke of Heaven. And yet, equally strong and undeniable is the testimony of the Bible, that Jesus Christ is worshipped by all the intelligent and holy in heaven and on earth. What then follows? Can the argument possibly be stronger to demonstrate that *Jesus Christ is God*? It is an argument confirmed by all who truly know Him, in all worlds; and it is an argument, which will grow stronger and stronger, every day and every hour, through time and through an endless eternity; for it is corroborated by every act of worship, rendered to him on earth and in heaven.

In this sublime worship, we, my hearers, may have part, not only here, but before His throne in heaven. There, all who now honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, shall, with golden harps, unite in the song of Moses and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Let us, then, now ask ourselves, Are we here worshipping and serving the Saviour, so as to be justified in the hope that we shall see Him, and glorify Him, and enjoy Him, in heaven? Here is the point, which it behoves us all to settle now. And I ask not, simply, whether you admit the reality of His claims to divine worship; but has this doctrine, in its power, reached your heart? Are you worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. The time is coming, we know, when there shall be none to gainsay the truth of His Godhead; when it shall be so written in the flames of a burning world, that all shall see it; and when, before His august throne, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, either in the wailings of despair, or in the anthems of Joy. In which of these my dear hearers, shall we have a part? Take heed, and be not deceived.

J. M. MATHEWS, D.D.

THE REMISSION OF SIN.

Luke i. 77.—“ *To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins.*”

THESE words are a part of the address of Zacharias to his son just born. The natural affections of the father yielded to the more elevated sentiments of the Man of God ; and the gratification derived from the birth of one who should comfort him concerning his work and the toil of his hands is lost sight of amid visions of the honours and perils clustering around him as the Prophet of the Highest, and the forerunner of the Lord.

The early life of this distinguished man was passed in the sequestered solitude of the desert, where his habits were formed to self-denial and industry ; the spirit of piety prompting him to unwearied labours for the salvation of men. He was directed by God to give the knowledge of the Saviour, to proclaim the arrival of his long expected advent, and prepare His way before all people. This preparation consisted in breaking off their sins by righteousness, submitting to baptism in token of their repentance, and receiving Jesus as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Nor without such preparation could the announcement of the Messiah's appearance give them peace and joy, as is clear from the fact, that to the Scribes and Pharisees, and even to the nation at large, the manifestation of the Redeemer proved a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, over which they fell into perdition through unbelief.

The portion of the text which I shall now especially consider, is the phrase—*the remission of sins*. What is sin, and how is it remitted ? are the two important questions which the passage suggests for our examination.

I. What is sin? An Apostle has defined it to be a "transgression of the law." A law founded in justice and perfect equity, is an authoritative rule of action, shewing what is, and what is not, to be done. The law of God is a code of holy precepts, binding upon all intelligent beings in the universe; and the wilful violation of these precepts is sin. The Saviour has comprehended the whole of the law in a few words—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Short and concise as this explanation is, it embraces whatever of duty or obligation rests on man; and the transgression or neglect of any one of the duties or obligations involved in it, is sin.

Sin is variously denominated according to its aspects and relations. There is "the sin that dwelleth in us"—the wickedness of the heart, sometimes called *original sin*, which means the evil principle which has taken hold of our common nature, and is invariably developed by every child of Adam knowing good from evil. There is also *actual sin*, manifested in the temper and conversation, in the conduct and course of life. Wherever there are envyings, pride, malice, hard thoughts of God, murmurings against his providence, perverse disputings, deceit, hypocrisy, disregard of the Sabbath, and neglect of the House of God—wherever there is slander, or evil speaking, or fraud, or contention, or covetousness, or hatred, uttered or unexpressed, there is actual sin. And there are sins of *omission* which consist in leaving things undone that ought to be done; and sins of *commission*, or the doing of that which ought not to be done. There are *secret sins*, such as the eye of God only sees; and *presumptuous sins*, which are those committed in the face of the world, and in opposition to light and conviction of duty.

But the essential element of sin is its *voluntariness*. It is an act of the *will*, violating the obligations of man to his Maker; and it matters not, whether that violation be open

to the world, or concealed from human view; whether it be committed in the most hidden recesses of the soul, or on the mountain-top; it is enough that it is committed, that God's eye sees it, and His law condemns it. If the heart is evil, all its movements are evil also, and no plea offered in extenuation, can acquit us of the charge of disobedience, and of wicked works.

This then is sin: a violation of the known and eternal law of God—a law, holy, just, and good in all its requirements, and in all the penalties it denounces on the transgressor.

II. How is sin remitted? This is a question of the very first importance. As we are all sinners—all guilty—how can we be forgiven? That we may obtain remission, is evident. St. Paul, addressing the people in the synagogue at Antioch, having expounded the mission of Christ, and His resurrection, said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." And in his epistle to the Ephesians, he says—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." And this agrees with the remission spoken of in the text, which means the cancelling of the guilt, the withdrawal of the indictment, and the removal or turning aside the penalty which the transgressor has incurred.

On the question before us, we remark,

First: the remission of sins is *the sole prerogative of God*. He is the supreme lawgiver; and to Him all are amenable. The keys of death and of Hell are with Him. He openeth and no man shutteth, He shutteth and no man openeth. This is an attribute of essential Deity, and whoever presumes to invade it, is guilty of the highest act of insult to the Majesty of Heaven. When Christ asserted His power to forgive sins, the Jews understood Him to claim equality with God, and they at once, regarding Christ as man and nothing more, indignantly exclaimed,—“Who can forgive

sins but God only?" Mistaken as they were in their judgment of our Lord, they were right in the principle itself—that God alone can grant forgiveness.

We remark, *secondly*, that *without remission there is no salvation*. The everlasting happiness of the soul in the presence of God, involves the necessity of reconciliation to Him. How is this to be effected? Justice must be satisfied. The perfections and the honour of the Divine and supreme Governor of the world demand a sufficient oblation; an oblation which will clearly shew, that while the Lord delights in mercy, He will by no means clear the guilty. But man has no such sacrifice to offer. "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil?" No, the sinner cannot escape on such terms. The truth and holiness of the Deity forbid it. The whole scheme of the gospel goes to prove, that in the method proposed for the sinner's pardon, there must be the fullest possible exhibition of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the immutability of the Divine purpose, that not one jot or tittle of this law shall fail.

And this brings us to a *third* particular—sins are only remissible through *the sacrifice of an all-sufficient victim*. This is the primary law of the Gospel; its distinct and cardinal element. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission;" there was none under the law; there is none under the Gospel. This principle was well understood through the patriarchal and levitical dispensations. The sacrifice of calves and of goats, though it could not of itself take away sin, was yet a lively and most expressive type of the great sacrifice of the cross by which guilt is expiated and forgiven. The infinite dignity of the Victim, his spotless purity and boundless compassion, combine to fit Him for the mediatorial office, and to render his obedience unto death an ample vindication of the purity and justice of God; while it establishes a platform on which mercy might

be displayed towards all the penitent and believing children of men.

Testimonies to this prominent doctrine are found in every part of the sacred volume. It is said—"He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. He gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. He suffered once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Such are a few of the many passages, which teach us how sin is remitted.

The whole revelation of the gospel on this point, may be summed up in few words. Man is a sinner. The law of God condemns him. He has no power to annul that law, nor evade its execution. The Saviour interposes,—not to break down the law, but to magnify it by yielding Himself to its curse. He offers Himself a sacrifice of sweet smelling savor. This sacrifice is accepted of heaven. This principle on which sins are remitted, is proclaimed in the ears of the world, and the blessing of pardon is assured to every individual who will accept it on the terms upon which the overture is made. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

To improve—We learn from hence the vastness of the believer's obligations to Christ. "Ye are bought with a price," saith the Apostle—a price, indeed, more precious than the gold of Ophir, and all earth's treasures. It was freely paid—paid by the blood of the Incarnate. It procured a suspension of the law's immediate demand on the transgressor—a space for repentance—the gift of the Holy Spirit—and the reversion of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. And who can comprehend the extent of obligation which such blessings impose? But for this love of Jesus, no light had fallen on the darkness of the grave—no hope had cheered the gloomi-

ness of man's pathway thither. No joy in his prospective triumphs over hell had arisen in his heart, and no crown had awaited him at God's right hand ! O ! for more than an angel's tongue to celebrate His praise !

We learn the fearful infatuation of those who turn away from Christ, and look elsewhere for support and consolation. All beside is vanity and vexation of spirit. All else is disappointment and sorrow, trouble and anguish. What though they persuade themselves that they are not the vilest of the vile, and that their virtues are many ? Still the law of God condemns them, declaring that there is not a just man on the earth that doeth good and sinneth not. And what though at present they have no corroding of conscience, nor distressing fears of death and judgment ? Still their condition is fearful ; they are sleeping over a volcano that may emit its burning lava at any moment !

Christ is all in all. His love is wonderful. His riches unsearchable. To Him alone can we turn with safety. If we close our eyes to the opening heavens, and shut our ears to the voice that issues thence—saying, “ This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him ;” if we pour contempt on the scene of Calvary whence cometh the prayer, “ Father, forgive them ;” if we grieve the Holy Spirit by which we are “ sealed unto the day of redemption ”—then the door of salvation will be shut against us ; our doom, in that case is sealed, and nothing remains but a certain fearful looking for of judgment which shall devour the adversaries. And, must it be so ? Will any among you fling salvation from your arms—embrace the world and death in the face of all that Infinite Love can do ? O ! forbear—look to heaven—listen to the pleadings of the Cross—throw yourselves down at the feet of Jesus, and live for ever !

R. S. STORES, D.D.

THE AGGRESSIVE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

Acts viii., 4.—“*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere, preaching the word.*”

OUR text carries us back to days of persecution for the Word's sake. The empire which Satan had so long held, was now rapidly waning before the power of the Cross, and “he came down in great wrath because his time was short.” But his devices against the truth were vain. The cause of righteousness gained ground daily ; it gained fresh strength from fresh opposition. Converts to Christ were multiplied even around the stake ; and the agents in this work of intended extermination, were made to see that all their apparent victories were really defeats. “The blood of martyrs proved the seed of the Church.” One reason for this is intimated by the fact stated in the text, “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere ;” and wherever they went they acted out their religion—publishing with their lips, and enforcing by their lives, the gospel of the grace of God. From this statement, I deduce the doctrine of this discourse. That it is *preeminently by aggressive movements that the Church is to prosper*. By this means she is to maintain spiritual life in her own soul, cause religion to flourish at home, and extend its triumphs abroad.

1. The truth of this doctrine is suggested by the first impulses of the religious principle, the spirit of love in every Christian's bosom.

False religionists, both among Pagans and nominal Christians, have, I know, taught that piety was a kind of dormant, contemplative spirit ; that its power was to be manifested in patient endurance rather than holy action ; in a voluntary withdrawment from the world to avoid its con-

taminations, rather than in resolute efforts to make the world better. This was a leading feature in the ancient stoical philosophy. The same idea is incorporated into several of the religious systems prevalent in the East at the present day. It is this false notion, in nominally Christian churches, that has sent thousands of self-deceived, and no doubt some truly good men into the seclusion of the cloister, to spend their days in penances and prayers, rather than in executing plans of benevolent effort. Now it is not the true spirit of religion, but the want of it, that leads to such erroneous views of christian duty. The unsophisticated promptings of the new born soul are always to active effort for God. This is strikingly exhibited in young converts. It is illustrated with great beauty in the conduct of Christ's earliest disciples. So it must be ; for true religion is the spirit of Christ. It looks with pain upon the amazing evils of sin, under whatever form they may appear. It sees the world lying in wickedness, and it is not satisfied with sighing over its miseries. Its language is, *something must be done*. It conceives plans, it demands efforts for the world's conversion. Every real Christian that lives in the spirit of religion may consult his own consciousness on this subject. In his most favored hours and nearest approaches to God, he will find his impulses to religious effort strongest. The history of the apostles and primitive Christians confirms this view.

2. The doctrine I have stated further appears from the fact, that truth is the grand instrument which God employs to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, and advance and establish the kingdom of His Son. Now we know that the truth can be available for this high end, only as it is brought into contact with the human mind ; and this, of course, involves a great enterprise of the very character spoken of in the text. The Word of God must not only be translated into all the languages of the earth, but it must be carried to every man's door ; nay, its great truths must be pressed

home upon every man's conscience. What a mighty work here opens for Christians of every name ; it is, moreover, eminently an aggressive work, a missionary movement. How are they to accomplish it, by shutting themselves up in nunneries and cloisters, and giving themselves up to divine contemplations ? Is this the way to cause their light so "to shine before men, that they seeing their good works may glorify their Father in heaven ?" Alas, for the preposterous teachings of a perverted Christianity !

Surely there are facts enough to show that the strongholds of error and sin cannot be demolished by *sighs and prayers alone*. They are not to fall down as the walls of Jericho fell before Israel of old, at the sound of a trumpet. The Captain of salvation has seen fit to appoint other means of success—means which must task all our energies and resources—resources of men and of money, of talent and of influence.

3. The entire history of the gospel confirms this view of the subject. When has any signal advance been made in the work of human salvation, except by a movement similar to that described in the text ? The very foundations of hope towards God were laid in our world by a stupendous movement of this very character. Christ's great redeeming enterprise—what was it but one of aggression ? What but the boundless benevolence of heaven bearing down upon the dominions of sin and darkness, in this apostate world ? His mission was gratuitous on God's part, and unwelcome on ours, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Look at His whole career ; from the manger to the cross, it was a missionary career. He left the hallowed places of the temple, and His sweet retreats for meditation and prayer amid the olive groves that were round about Jerusalem, and sought out, often at the hazard of His life, the miserable victims of disease and sin. He traversed various portions of Judea again and again, journeying on foot, "without a place to lay His head." The Evangelical record describes His manner of life in one short sentence :

"He went about doing good." In times of growing declension and abounding wickedness, some Elijah must come forth to warn the wicked of their ways—to stand in the breach and roll back the outbreking tide of iniquity and death: the bulwarks of idolatry must be assaulted, and all the faithful must unite their efforts, calling on God and putting their hands to the work of reform. Piety may retire to the caves of the earth, and weep her life out in secret places. It is all in vain. The abomination of desolation will spread wider and wider; false prophets will multiply in numbers, and grow bolder in blasphemy, until not only the holy city, but the holy temple shall have become a den of iniquity. No, religion must not retire from the field, nor be content to occupy only neutral ground. She must make an aggressive movement or all is lost. Some Nehemiah must *rouse* and *lead* that remnant of God's host that has not bowed the knee to Baal; and pressing onward from conquering to conquer, must in the name of the Lord of Hosts achieve the victory.

If this aspect of things strikes us in the history of the Old Testament dispensation, how much more in that of the New. Mark how faithfully the first preachers of the gospel carried out their divine commission. They began, as directed, at Jerusalem. But having set up thousands of trophies to the power of the truth at that central point, they took up the standard of the cross and bore it in triumph round the globe. They travelled from city to city, and from region to region; and everywhere they acted aggressively. They assailed pagan superstition in all its strongholds; they overturned its altars of blood; they cast down its false gods, and called its deluded votaries to repentance, exhorting them "to turn from these dumb idols to serve the living God." It was thus that the apostles, their coadjutors and successors, conquered the earth for Christ. Thus they subdued all nations to the obedience of faith, until shouts of victory and songs of deliverance went up to Heaven from a regenerated world.

Turn to a still later page in the history of the Church. How was it at the Reformation? Luther was a monk, shut up in a cloister; there, as he read his Latin Bible, the grace of God touched his heart; the scales of error fell from his eyes, as they did from the eyes of Saul of Tarsus. Having received the great doctrine of justification by faith he rose upon Germany as a new and glorious star. He went forth as the sun when he shineth in his strength. By God's help he rolled away the thick darkness of ages and filled Europe with intellectual and spiritual light. But mark, this great work was not effected chiefly by the prayers of the cloister, but by many a hard-fought battle for God and His truth in the open field.

4. This subject throws light upon the melancholy fact, "known and read of all men," that many churches which have numbers, and wealth, and much secular influence, have *no corresponding moral power*. Such instances are, alas! too frequent in our own country, still more frequent in the mother country, and painfully common in all communities. Wo to churches and to ministers who are thus "at ease in Zion"! A deep spiritual lethargy, like the sleep of death, settles down upon the people. Christians live unto themselves, and care little for others; selfish and worldly they make no advances in holiness; sinners remain unrepented and unconverted; "the ways of Zion mourn," her walls moulder, and the great end for which the church exists is defeated. In what sense can it be affirmed of such an association of professing Christians that they are the "salt of the earth, or the light of the world"? Do they not, rather, painfully verify another declaration of our Lord, "for if the salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." The way of all great apostasies from God and His truth has been prepared by just such churches, churches holding, it may be, substantially an orthodox faith, and having a "name to live,"

and *nothing but a name*. Let us, then, be warned. The path both of individual and associated piety is the same. In order even to permanent existence there must be aggressive holy action. The church must not live always in the temple, or abide on the mount, nor even tarry at Jerusalem. Having surveyed the field around her, and lifted up her heart to God for help, she must go forth to self-denying toils and conflicts. The same is true of the individual members of the church; and just in proportion as they resist the claims of duty and withdraw from all active effort for God, their piety withers, and their usefulness declines. Hence the deplorable fact, that in every church so many are found who add to the *numbers*, but not to the *strength or efficiency* of the church. They might at any time enter the church triumphant, if peradventure the gate of heaven could open wide enough to admit them; and the church militant would not, in her great conflict with sin, miss their influence. Like the retinue of an eastern army they swell the roll, encumber the camp, impede the march, and in the day of battle they only embarrass the faithful soldier, and insure disaster and discomfiture to the host.

These nominal disciples of Christ may be strictly moral; exact in many duties belonging to their profession, especially those which relate more immediately to themselves. Why then are they not useful Christians? Simply because they do not make exertions and sacrifices to carry forward those great Christian enterprises at home and abroad, which bear powerfully on the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the destinies of men for eternity. When such disciples of Jesus die, who will gather around their graves to moisten them with tears of pious regret? Or who, when they depart, will appear at the gate of glory to welcome them to everlasting habitations?

The story of your religious life will soon be written. It will be summed up chiefly in this,—What did you prayerfully attempt for God; what to limit the evils of sin, and

diffuse the blessings of salvation? What you have done, or *humbly aimed to do* for this great consummation in your own soul, in your family and neighbourhood, in the Sabbath-school, in the church, and in the world, will have a sweet remembrance on earth, and an everlasting memorial in heaven. All else will pass into utter oblivion, or be remembered only to diminish the joys or aggravate the woes of an unwasting eternity.

J. H. LINSLEY, D.D.

THE SUBILITY OF TRUE RELIGION.

Proverbs xv. 24.—“*The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.*”

SPIRITUAL religion—the religion of the Bible, is here presented as a noble and an elevated concern. As delineated in the pages of Divine Inspiration, its obvious feature is in direct opposition to the predominant temper and bias of the human heart, and to the general maxims which govern the world. The subjects of saving piety, tread and travel in a path far above “the common walks of life, just on the verge of heaven.” The text is an example of the brief and lucid manner in which the Scriptures represent that religion which is pure and undefiled before God. “The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.” The terms are very suggestive and significant. The way of life, is the way of true godliness. It is eminently a

highway. They are wise who find and pursue it ; but they who do not, follow in the broad and beaten track that leads to death.

We propose to notice *three things* in which the way of life—of pure, spiritual, and eternal life—is above to the wise in *principle*, in *taste*, in *pursuit*.

I. Religion—the wisdom that cometh from above—is *elevated in principle*. Every one who examines carefully his thoughts and emotions, will perceive, that his feelings take their character and colour from the views of the mind; and follow in accordance with the source from which they spring. Accordingly it will be found, that, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” He may have and hold good principles in theory, but if his moral sentiments and inclinations are found in conflict with them, they only serve to deepen the crime of his disobedience and guilt. A man may be worse, but no one was ever found better, than his principles. What I am concerned to shew is, that the motive or ground of action with the sincere, but truly pious, is far more elevated than that which prompts the conduct of the irreligious and the merely nominal Christian in his professed subjection to the gospel of Christ.

First. It is elevated above *the maxims of worldly prudence*. Such prudence is really nothing more than a selfish and time-serving policy. It extends solely to interests of a personal and temporary nature. Its views are narrowed down to a class of objects which are bounded by earth, time, and self. It is among the maxims of persons governed by this element, to compromise religious principle rather than encounter opposition, or be exposed to the world’s censure. They would withhold or shun truth rather than meet reproach ; cry peace rather than give uneasiness ; and leave men to perish rather than cease to please them. But the truly wise, who are pursuing the highway of life, soar in nobler sphere. They discern between what is to be sought, and what is to be avoided. Their prudence is sub-

lime. It prompts them to lay up treasures in heaven—to live to Him who died for them—to sacrifice human applause rather than forego the approval of their conscience and their God—and to subject men to present alarm and fear for their eternal salvation, rather than suffer them to die in the possession of a false peace which must issue in endless sorrow.

And in close alliance with this temporising prudence, we remark, that the religion of the truly wise is elevated in principle *above the standard of worldly morality*. It is a mournful fact in relation to large masses of almost every Christian community, that the great body of persons are governed by principles of action which have scarcely any perceptible affinity to those which Christianity suggests and enjoins. And what is more painful still, not a few who in charity, are hoped to have some experience of the power of the gospel, seem so strongly to sympathize with the surrounding mass, as to substitute its rule of right and duty for that which is presented in the volume of eternal truth they profess to believe and receive. The grand defect of that scheme of morality which is current in the world, is its utter disregard of the character of *motives*. With man in general, if the outward form of an action does not conflict with any of its loose and unsettled rules of conduct, it meets the full demand of their required morality. No matter what is transpiring in the heart: no matter how much of malice, and hatred, and envy are rankling there; provided their image is not impressed on the visible deportment. No matter if the very bitterness of contempt rages within, if the smile of kindness appears without. But God looks on the heart. He requires truth there. And it is by reference to its state that all who are wise unto salvation, estimate character and conduct. They who are decidedly *in the way of life*, judge not by the standard of this world's ethics; nor regard any action as thoroughly right while the heart is radically wrong.

Secondly. The wise are elevated in taste.

There is in Scriptural religion, every thing to purify and chasten, to elevate and refine the faculties of the mind. It gives a quickness to discern, and a sensibility to feel the beauties and deformities of objects, especially those of a moral character. Careering onward in the way of life which is above, they cannot come down to the trifles which the sons and daughters of vanity regard with peculiar attention. The dim glitter of earthly splendour has small attraction for them. They are not to disregard appearances: nor effect a sublimity of feeling by the putting on a coarse and unsightly apparel. There is often more pride in such persons, than in those who avoid the folly. Still be it observed, that while the decent garment and the decorated dwelling are both allowable and proper, the truly wise will not heap useless appendages on the body which may be to-morrow in the habiliments of death, or expend on the dwelling they inhabit that which would send the gospel to perishing thousands.

And the persons of whom the text speaks, are elevated above the craving desire of human applause. Most unhappy is the man whose moral taste can only be satisfied by the praise of the world. If you meet him in the social circle, he is always calling attention to something he has said or done; to his skill or his judgment in some matter that may have passed through his hands, or which he thinks ought to have been committed to his management; and this with a view to call forth the laudation of the company. Miserable man! He lives on the breath that wafts to his ear the voice of flattery. Not so the wise. His way of life is above all this. He is not indifferent to the esteem of the good, whether rich or poor. But their applause is not the element in which he lives. He has experienced its emptiness; he has discovered its fickleness; he has detected its impotency to charm away sorrow from the heart. And he is too deeply conscious of his manifold infirmities in the performance of his religious duties to feed upon the opinion and

approbation of his fellow men, for those things which he knows are differently regarded by God the Judge of all.

We remark, *finally*. The way of life is above to the wise, in *the elevation of their pursuits*. We must be careful to distinguish here. With regard to their worldly occupations, they are the same. There is no exemption from toil and labour allotted to Christians as such. By far the larger number of the spiritually wise, are found in the commercial and working classes of society. But I refer to their motives, their efforts, their final destination, the salvation of their souls. Heaven is the prize of their high calling. The pursuit of this is no selfish aim, since it is, by Divine appointment, the direct means of securing the great end for which man was created. Nor is the pursuit of heaven any actual dereliction of the best good which this world has to afford. It is not by its most eager devotees, but by the aspirants after immortality, that this life is best enjoyed. Its richest blessings are poured upon those who keep the world beneath their feet. It rewards with all its real good, those who are most indifferent to aught that is found below the skies. All that is really valuable comes into their possession. This may sound strange to those who "judge by feeble sense." It is nevertheless true. Bread and water with God's blessing are real comforts. A dinner of herbs to the man of a mind contented with an inward sense of pardoning mercy, is a sweet repast. He enjoys a satisfaction and a peace which the wicked worldling surrounded by every earthly luxury, knows nothing of.

And the way of life is above to the wise, with respect to religion itself. He seeks more after *holiness* than *happiness*. Comfort in the path of duty we know to be such only as is solid, pure, and abiding. He has his eye fixed on things not literally seen and temporal. Religion, indeed has its present benefits infinitely surpassing all worldly good; but they are small in comparison with the eternal weight of glory to be revealed and enjoyed in heaven. High there-

fore, above the thought of these, the genuine heirs of glory, are pursuing their incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance in the kingdom of God and the Lamb.

To *apply* what has been now said.

We see, *first*, that pure religion is vastly more elevated and holy than is generally supposed. Men think it what it is too commonly seen to be in the lives of its professors, and not what it is declared to be by Him whose judgment is according to truth. Hence it is, that many rest at a point much below the one they are required to reach. They manifest scarcely one Scriptural mark of a spiritual elevation of soul. If all who hope that they are the subjects of a sublime religion, were to institute an impartial investigation of their state, it is not improbable that it would lead to discoveries fatal to the confidence of not a few who now cry, Peace, peace! Alas, that any with the Bible in their hands, should cheat themselves into a persuasion, that they are in the way of life, while neither in principle, taste, or pursuit, are they rising to "depart from hell beneath!" Such are not "the wise, in the way of life."

Secondly. It hence appears that the religion of Scripture is above the conception of worldly minds. Its sublime principles are too lofty for their comprehension. The end it proposes, and the duty it enjoins, are beyond the grasp of their grovelling powers. We advocate no will-worship—the seclusion of the monastic cell, nor the unnatural retirement of the nunnery—but we still maintain that genuine piety is an unearthly thing. And when they who wonder at this strange assertion, shall drink of its pure spirit, and taste of its blessedness, they will have the witness in themselves that it is true.

Finally. We must in all fidelity draw the painful inference implied in the text—namely, that they who are not associated with the wise in the way of life above, are not departing from hell beneath. There are two ways—only two, between which to choose—the strait and narrow way

of life, and the broad way of death. The former conducts all its travellers to an eternal heaven ; the latter to an eternal hell! You may judge of the end you will reach, by the way you pursue. Are you in the way of death? I beseech you stop. Proceed not one step farther. You may yet arise and dwell with God : but if you resolve to go on in the road you have hitherto travelled, you must in the issue sink into hell beneath without remedy !

CHARLES JENKINS.

CONVERSION AND LIFE.

Ezekiel xviii. 27.—“ *When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.*”

RIGHTLY to understand these words, as of the Scriptures generally, it is necessary to ascertain the occasion on which they were spoken. By turning to the chapter, from which they are taken, we find that the blessed God is vindicating the equity and justice of his proceedings in punishing the wicked for their transgressions. National judgments had been inflicted upon the Jews for their sins against God. Instead however of attributing these calamities to their own wickedness, they cast the blame on the Almighty, and said that His ways were not equal—that is, were not just or righteous. This vile imputation upon His divine conduct and character He repels ; and declares, that if any wicked man shall turn from his wickedness and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live—that is to say, his soul shall be saved, he shall not die eternally.

Many thoughts arise upon the subjects thus brought before us. We shall select two for present consideration. *First*. What is the nature of that *turning* of which the text speaks; and *secondly*, what is the salvation to which it leads. These two great questions embrace the most essential points included in the passage.

I. What is the turning required in order to life? I may at once answer,—it is the same as our Lord and the apostles mean when they use the term *conversion*. It is a change of conduct produced by a change of heart—that is, by altered views and feelings with respect to sin and holiness, religion and impiety, God and the world. It is the turning away from wickedness to goodness, from rebellion to obedience, from impenitence to godly sorrow.

But we must be careful to point out this turning from wickedness more minutely, lest we should deceive ourselves. Be it then understood, that it is not merely the abandonment of the outward act of sin, important as a first step as that really is. Many cease from various causes the open commission of some long cherished iniquity, when they are not really converted from it. When the chastening hand of God is upon them; when sickness, or the near approach of death alarms them, they will abstain from their sinful course. Ahab, when God denounced heavy judgments upon him, could rend his clothes, put sackcloth upon his flesh, fast, and lie softly: but he still loved his sins, and died awfully in them. Pharaoh, under the plagues said more than once, “I have sinned,” but no sooner had the Israelites departed, than he repented of the permission he had given them, and pursued them to his own destruction. Judas Iscariot, who was even numbered with the Apostles, who lived in companionship with Christ, witnessed his miracles, heard his discourses, and for three years had maintained the demeanour of a disciple, and the form of religion, but he was never turned away from the wickedness of his heart, for at last he sold his master, and perished by his own hand.

Simon, the Sorcerer, at the preaching of Philip, could give up all his witchcraft, believe and be baptized, continue with the Evangelist, and wonder at the signs and miracles which were done, yet he was not turned away from his lusts, and finally was pronounced by the Apostles to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity.

Now observe, clearly does it appear from these instances, that a man may amend his life, leave off many sins, make a profession of religion, and pass in the world for a Christian, and yet be dead in trespasses and sins in the sight of the heart-searching God. The question then arises, *What is that turning which saves the soul?* It is a conversion both of the *outward* and *inner* life. It is a turning from evil to good, not only in the external life, but in the frame and emotions of the heart. When the mind sees sin in its true malignant character, and a bleeding Redeemer as the effectual remedy for its cure, it instinctively recoils at the thought of wilful sin, as a man would start back from a serpent that was lying in its path. Look at an ignorant and idle gardener. He is content with just cutting off the weeds, while he suffers their roots to remain in all their strength. Look at the slovenly, slothful husbandman. He may not suffer his land to be wholly covered with the rankling thistle or any other noxious weed, but he is content with cropping off the leaves, while the earth is suffered to remain as foul as before. But now in the moral work of which we speak, the sincere and earnest Christian, goes to the root of all his sins. He would not leave a single fibre to vegetate in the soil of his heart. He is no outside mender merely. The love of Christ constraineth him, and henceforth he would not live unto himself, but unto Him who died for him, and rose again.

There is a transforming efficacy accompanying the gospel, when it comes with power and the Holy Ghost. Look at the case of Zaccheus. When he went up into the sycamore tree out of curiosity, he was a worldly, grasping, overreach-

ing publican, but no sooner did salvation come to his house, than he become the humble, devout, and generous benefactor, ready to restore even more than the Jewish law required, to those he had wronged. Take again the instance of St. Paul : what an awful picture of his enmity to Christ and his people before his conversion, he gives us ! But one sovereign word of the Saviour whom he had persecuted, changed his inner nature, and he became a new creature. From that moment he turned away from his wickedness, preached the faith he once destroyed, and devoted his entire life to doing what was lawful and right in the work of the Lord. Look again at the Corinthians. In their state without the gospel, they were sinners of the vilest description. Not a crime in all the long dark catalogue of Satanic abominations but they had committed with greediness. But washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, their former ungodliness was forthwith abandoned, and they became the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, having their fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.

Such, then, is the turning of which the text speaks. It is a turning from a thoughtless, careless, prayerless state, no less from that of gross criminality, and it includes the reception of Christ by faith, the belief of the gospel, the reliance of the soul on the sacrifice of the cross for eternal life.

II. The text states the issue. "He shall save his soul alive."

It has been justly said, that the hope of success is the mainspring of all human exertion. It pervades all ranks of society. It rules in the councils of princes, and in the cottages of the poor. It would be heartless to work day and night without intermission, and to be told that after all you would receive nothing for your pains.

The same principle of hope is equally necessary, and equally operative where it exists, with regard to the soul.

It would indeed be cheerless to be told, that though we want, desire, strive for salvation, it is all in vain. What a damp it would cast over the soul to hear, that though Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners : that although He died on the cross for that purpose, and calls and invites us to come to Him for salvation ; and that although we would willingly commit ourselves into His hands for those blessings which He offers to give—I say, what a damp it would strike into our hearts to hear, that after all these things there is no hope—we must perish after prayers and tears, in our sins.”

But blessed be God, this is not the case. He does not say—“seek ye my face, and perish.” No, but “seek me, and your soul shall live.” Every promise of the Gospel, not only encourages us to rest our soul on Christ, but assures us in words the most distinct and positive, that if we do so we shall be saved.

Mark, brethren, the declaration—“he shall save his soul alive?” Observe the *personality* of the assurance. It is not said that a soul may be saved—or another’s soul saved—but *his* soul—that is the soul of the wicked man whoever he be, who turns from his wickedness, doeth that which is lawful and right, and as the tenor of the gospel runs—who relies on the infinite mercy of the blessed Redeemer. That man’s soul shall be saved. Look also at the *boon promised*. It is *life*—not of the poor body in its present state of mortality, but of the soul—that portion of man by which we think—move—and understand; that deathless element of our being which nothing can extinguish—*that* shall live, not merely exist, but be happy, blessed, saved from the bitter pains of eternal death. Notice also the *certainty* of this. His soul *shall* be saved alive. As sure as God is in heaven, as surely as Christ died on the cross, as surely as the Bible contains this blessed promise, so surely shall that man never perish, but have eternal life. The faithfulness of God, the ratification of His promises which are all yea,

and amen in Christ Jesus, the long cloud of illustrious witnesses of all ages and conditions who have sought and obtained mercy, the omnipotence of Him who has given the wicked man grace to turn from sin, and do that which is lawful and right—all concur to shew the certainty of eternal salvation to every one who thus believeth and turns to Christ. Oh! what an incentive is this to every one to forsake the wicked, that he may live! In the beautiful lines of the plaintive Poet—

“ He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies—
But if the wand’rer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways and sigh for a return,
Bewildered once, must he bewail his loss
For ever and for ever? No, the cross once seen
Is death—eternal death to every vice.
Else He that hung there suffered all His pain,
Bled, groaned, and agonized, and died in vain.”

R. W. ROBERTS.

ON THE PROMISES OF GOD.

2 Corinthians i. 20. — “ *For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.* ”

AMIDST the changes and afflictions of life, every one, whether he will confess it or not, must be sensible of the importance of a resource in the day of adversity, to which he may fly. In proportion as life advances, and its pilgrimage draws to a close, the necessity of such a refuge becomes more apparent. The alluring promises of the world have

too often proved worthless, and the fallacies of hope have too often been detected, to gain our confidence in such a condition. The heart requires repose, but where can it be found? "The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me." Is there then no resting place for the weary spirit, nothing in which it can confide? There is. The text exhibits it. "The promises of God," are a firm foundation—"the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

I. Let us consider their nature. St. Peter says, they are "exceedingly great and precious;" a fact to which all will yield a cheerful testimony who have placed their dependence on them in the hour of conflict and trial.

There is nothing connected with our best interests, whether it respects the present or the future world, but the promises of God may serve to promote. With regard to this life, while they do not encourage us to pray for the honours and riches of earth, they assure us that our prayers for a supply of all reasonable wants shall be heard and answered. The eye which notices the falling sparrow, is not heedless of the safety of the just. The hand that feeds the ravens will not leave the saints of the Most High to perish for want. The care which paints with so much beauty the flowers of the field, will not leave without needful clothing those who put their trust in God. "The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "He shall dwell on high; the place of his defence shall be the munition of rocks; his bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure." Our blessed Lord has therefore directed us to ask for "our daily bread;" a plain and conclusive intimation that our heavenly Father will not withhold it from us.

As it regards spiritual blessings, the promises of God are more ample. In language the most definite and absolute, they invite us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of

need." The loftiness of the heavens above the earth is given by the Almighty, as the measure of the Divine mercy; "the depth of the sea" is introduced to represent the veil of concealment which shall be drawn over our iniquities; the everlasting opposition of the east to the west, is the distance to which our transgressions shall be removed. The hesitating step, the meditated confession of the returning prodigal, are encouraged and quickened, by the alacrity and joy with which the venerable and injured parent runs to embrace his prodigal child. No circumstance of spiritual conflict is left without adequate assurance of strength according to our day. No sigh of the prisoner for deliverance from the bondage of his soul, but enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. With the most moving and tender forms of speech, the backslider is besought to remember from whence he is fallen, to repent, and return to God, and the promise is, "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord."

In a word, so ample are the promises of God to all classes who seek Him, that no man can in any wise doubt the divine mercy. The pardon of sin to the penitent, the salvation of those who believe in Christ, the sanctification of the redeemed, their support in trial and temptation, their guidance in perplexity, peace in death and glory beyond the grave, are promises made through the Redeemer; and though heaven and earth shall pass away, not one of these shall fail.

II. Such being the nature and extent of the promises, let us notice *secondly*, their stability and truth. They are affirmed to be "yea and amen." The word *yea*, is affirmative, and expresses the positive and unconditional character of the promises made in or through Christ. It means that there shall be no vacillation—no fickleness on the part of God; no abandonment of His gracious intention, or change of purpose.

In Christ they are also said to be *Amen*. Our Lord him-

self is called "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." And the expression here means, that all the promises which are made to man through the Redeemer shall be faithfully and assuredly fulfilled. They are confirmed and established by the oath and covenant of God ; by the mediation of Christ ; by the operation of the Holy Spirit ; and it is utterly impossible they should fail. The whole Deity is pledged for their faithful and perfect fulfilment.

Here we have a marked contrast between the oracles of God, and the false and dubious oracles of the heathen world. These were delivered with such studied ambiguity, that fancy might put any interpretation upon them, as it suited the convenience or the wishes of the person to whom they were spoken. And should the event prove the reverse of the prediction, the oracle had in reserve a specious subterfuge in throwing the blame upon the misconstruction of the expounding party. Such were the wretched delusions of pagan idolatry.

Alike distinguishable are the divine promises from the variable, and often hypocritical expressions of men of the world. Alas ! how hollow are many of the large professions of friendship made by men ! How often has the trust reposed in him by confiding simplicity, been betrayed by thoughtlessness, or disappointed by perfidy ! Sincere in other cases, as was the promiser, how often reflection, or unforeseen events, made the engagement null and void ! This may not, in every instance, be ground for blame to the individual ; painful as it might be to the disappointed. There may be sufficient cause for the change. The promise might have been incautiously made ; circumstances may have arisen to render its fulfilment most undesirable ; and the happiness of those who made it, and no less those to whom it was made, renders it even a duty to supersede it.

But none of this contingency can attach to the solemn assurances of the blessed God. Every word of His is as sure as the throne on which He sits. Man may use high

expressions of courtesy to shew his politeness, and dull must the person be who does not know that they are words of course, and generally mean nothing ; but the words of the Eternal are not mere words of course, or embellishments of speech to please or allure. All is yea—certain; all is amen, faithful, solemn, and true, in Christ Jesus. Nothing is introduced merely for ornament, or to arrest the attention by exaggerated representation. Nothing is dramatic—nothing theatrical—nothing like the meretricious character of the play actor who, while he represents a monarch on the stage, has nought but poverty for his portion—nothing of this connected with the declarations of Jehovah—All is plain, positive, and true—

“ And if He speaks a promise once,
The eternal word is sure.”

If anything more is necessary to shew the validity of the promises of God, it is found in the mediatorial character of Him in whom and through whom they are made. He, the Mediator between God and man, is invested with every attribute necessary to ensure the acceptance of His plea, and the fulfilment of His word. He was made like unto His brethren in all things, that He might be a faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of His people. He died, and rose, and ascended to the right hand of God as an advocate in the court of heaven, the counsellor of His church, and the director of all events, till the last of His redeemed shall be gathered into the heavenly family. On so solid a basis, and with such plenary evidence, the apostle asserts the efficacy of His mediation, that we may have strong consolation in resting on the promises of God.

III. The only particular that remains for consideration is, the ultimate design and tendency of the promises of God: “To the glory of God by us”—either by us as ministers, or by us as Christians. The latter is the more probable

meaning of the two, and includes the former. The sentiment is, that the fulfilment of all the promises which God has made to His people, shall result in His glory and praise.

The promises display His *wisdom*. The scheme of redemption shews that the blessed God knows how to adapt the means to the end. If man is to be rescued from impending ruin, and restored to his forfeited privileges, he must feel the wound which his transgression has inflicted upon his moral nature. Dissevered from God, and doomed to death by His holy law, he became wretched, and full of dismay in prospect of the future. From this gloomy condition he possessed neither ability nor inclination to extricate himself, or knowledge to recover the felicity and glory which he had lost.

Herein the *goodness* of God is as conspicuous as His wisdom. Love, mercy, compassion, grace, all meet together and harmonize in the scheme of salvation developed in the promises of God. So obvious and direct is the path that leads to heaven, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. The promises of God, like bread, the universal element of men, afford sustenance and strength alike to the poor and the rich, the learned and the illiterate.

They also shew the glory of His *power*. They stand forth most luminously in contrast with human weakness. They constitute the moral force with which the Christian soldier successfully opposes the might of his great adversary. His fiery darts he quenches by faith : by the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God He turns to flight the armies of the aliens. In the perseverance of the Christian, in the redemption of the body, in the song of praise by the multitude of the saved, the glory of God is divinely seen.

H. WARREN.

THE EUNUCH'S JOY.

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Acts viii. 39.—“ *And he went on his way rejoicing.* ”
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AMONG the numerous mistakes which are prevalent on the subject of religion, there are two which the text goes far to explode. One is, that no man of rank, intelligence, and strong intellect will be found cordially to embrace the Christian faith in all its practical and personal influence: the other, is, that whoever so embraces it as to live under its teaching, and its spirit, must necessarily relinquish every thing, like joy and pleasure, and resign himself to a life of grief and melancholy.

How stands the case? Here is a man in a high position, bearing a name by which eastern princes were anciently designated, an officer of great authority in a royal court, being treasurer to Queen Candace, the sovereign of Ethiopia, one of the great kingdoms of Africa, part of which is now called Abyssinia, and is frequently mentioned in Scripture under the name of Cush. He was evidently a Jew, as he had been up to Jerusalem to worship at the festival of the Passover. It was not uncommon for Jews to occupy a high post of honour and distinction in foreign courts, as did Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon.

But his exalted rank and high office did not prevent him from taking a long and tedious journey of several hundred miles that he may devoutly observe the commandment of God which was binding upon the nation. He was now returning home, and according to the reckoning of modern travellers was about sixty miles south-west of Jerusalem. He had heard doubtless of the events which had recently occurred in that city with respect to the crucifixion, but he

did not know that the person whom the Jews out of envy had crucified was the Messiah. Philip the Evangelist was directed by the Spirit of God to go near and join himself to the chariot of the illustrious traveller. He did so and at the moment of approach he heard him read the prophet Esaias—It was a part of the fifty-third chapter of that prophecy, which so clearly foretold all the circumstances of the Messiah's birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, and the eventual triumph of His kingdom, that was now engaging the attention of the thoughtful Israelite. Up to this moment—the turning point of his truly religious character, he knew nothing of the Saviour as come; but no sooner had Philip preached unto him Jesus, than he cheerfully embraced the truth of the gospel, and with all readiness of mind submitted to the requisition of its Author, and by the ordinance of baptism, was admitted into the number of the followers of Christ.

And now with a joyful heart, he proceeds on his journey. And surely no man had ever better reason to be happy. He had found the Messiah—had been admitted to the blessings of salvation—he was filled with peace, and full of the hope of immortality. No doubts now perplexed his mind. The Scriptures were unveiled. The wonders of redemption were unfolded to his view. He received the exposition which the Evangelist had given with all the faith and confiding simplicity of a little child. His lips gave utterance to the feelings of his heart, and the song of joy broke forth in the desert, as he went on his way rejoicing.

Wherefore this transport of joy?

First. It was produced by what he had *heard*. Previously to his interview with Philip, he had a general acquaintance with the Scriptures. He had studied them also, since it is not credible that he who was found reading them in his carriage, had not read and reflected on them at home. Yet his views of the Redeemer and of His redemption were obscure. He admits as much, when in reply to

the question if he understood what he was reading, he said, "how can I except some one teach me?" This gave the opportunity to the Evangelist, to explain the doctrine on which the traveller was ruminating: and the man of God now would tell him that Jesus of Nazereth who had been crucified at Jerusalem was the person of whom he had been reading—that He was the promised Messiah—that He had made Himself an offering for sin—that He had risen on the third day, and subsequently, after forty days of sojourn on earth, during which time He had been seen repeatedly by His brethren, He ascended into heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of His Father. He would also assure him, that in consequence of what Jesus of Nazareth had endured and wrought, He had been the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him—and was now exalted at the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

Such information could not fail to give joy to a mind so anxious to discover the truth as was that of the eunuch, A man engaged in the prosecution of literary enquiries, will feel a high degree of satisfaction on every new discovery, and new acquisition to his store of learning. But if this be the case with respect to the discovery of truth in general, how much greater must be the joy when "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!"

Secondly. The eunuch went on his way rejoicing on account of what he had *received*. By faith he had received Christ Jesus the Lord—and the reception of Christ includes every thing. It includes *the pardon of sin*. He knew before that he was a sinner exposed to the sentence of condemnation, but now he learns that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. A new light now broke in upon his mind, and he saw the way of salvation more perfectly. The voice of mercy was as the sweetest music to his ears,

and tasting that the Lord was gracious, he went on his way rejoicing.

If, brethren, we know any thing of the blessedness of the man who has a good hope through grace that his iniquity is forgiven, we may likewise be of good cheer. A peace which passeth all understanding, fills the mind of those who from the experience of their own hearts can say—that though once blind, now they see, once alienated, now the children of God, once the captives of the world, the flesh, and the devil, but now delivered from the bondage of corruption, they are blessed with that liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free.

Moreover the individual whose case we are considering was now become *a new creature*, a partaker of the divine nature. This was another principle of joy. His heart was renewed. He had received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba Father. Christ was revealed to him in all the sufficiency of His grace, and he felt as one who has thrown off a burden too heavy to be borne. He was another man.

Thirdly. He went on his way rejoicing because of *what he had done*. Philip had preached unto him Jesus—that was his text and the subject on which he discoursed. But it is evident that he stated to his illustrious hearer the design of baptism, and the duty of being baptized. Hence as they went on their way, they came to a certain water; whether it were a river, a brook, a pond, or a standing pool, there are no circumstances to determine. It is well known, however, that there is no large stream—certainly no river of any name in the vicinity. All that is intimated in the history is, that there was water enough to perform the rite of baptism, whether that was by sprinkling, pouring, dipping, or immersion. It must be admitted from the narrative, that there might have been enough for either. No sooner had the eye of the convert fallen upon the water, then he asked his Instructor—"See here is water; what doth hinder

me to be baptized?" There is a noble promptitude in this. It evinces his purpose at once to give himself to Christ, to profess His name, and to be dedicated to His service.

Into the question as to the way in which the baptism was performed, I shall not now enter. There is nothing in the narrative to decide the much and often discussed point, whether it was by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling. It is not likely that it was by the first of these modes, as it would require a change of raiment. If by the second, the question is relieved of one difficulty, as it will account for the going down into or to the water, where sprinkling, or pouring might be conveniently performed. However administered, it was regarded as a solemn duty : and this done, the Spirit of God moved the Evangelist, now his work was accomplished, to hasten to some other field of labour. It was now the convert went on his way with joy. His mind was relieved on a subject that had perplexed him. He was satisfied respecting the Messiah ; and he felt delight in the conviction that he had done his duty promptly, in the profession of faith he had made. If we wish happiness, and would avoid clouds and gloom, we should do our duty at once. That is the only way to peace.

Finally. The *prospects that opened before him*, would also add to his joy. He had now something to communicate to the court, and to his countrymen resident in Ethiopia. He was now a willing and voluntary missionary of Christ, and had the prospect of diffusing the glad tidings of salvation to his fellow creatures. Ecclesiastical historians tell us, that he planted a church in Ethiopia, of which distinct mention is made in all the ancient histories of that country.

But the most cheering prospect, was that which referred to his own eternal happiness. The title, rank, wealth, honour, power, he possessed, would sink into nothing in his estimation, on a comparison with the glory that is to be revealed. If trouble should arise, it would appear to him light and momentary, in view of that sacred place where

God would wipe away all tears, and where the days of his mourning would be ended.

Such were the grounds of joy to this distinguished man. He was happy on account of what he had heard, received, done, and expected to realize. And to all who would be happy in the ways of God, we would say, "Go and do likewise."

ALEX. THOMSON.

ON THE ATONEMENT.

Hebrews ix. 22.—"*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.*"

THE ceremonial law of the Jewish dispensation, can only be justly apprehended and correctly understood, when viewed in its relation to the system of Christianity, whose spiritual import and nature it significantly typified. By its sacrifices and oblations, it shadowed forth the guilt of sin, and its plenary removal by the final offering of Jesus Christ once for all. Its directions and requisitions, its prohibitions and enactments, unintelligible in themselves, became lucid and impressive when contemplated in their evangelical reference and design.

The words of my text contain a plain and positive declaration with respect to one of the most solemn and instructive ordinances of the Jewish law. The apostle adverts to the fact, that generally all things ceremonially unclean were purified with blood—that is, by the slaughter of some victim prescribed by the ritual. He makes however, an exception in this matter. It was the usual custom, but the rule was not universal. Some things were purified by fire and water, and some by water only, *Numb. xxxi. 22—24*. But the

exceptions to the general rule were few, and referred to such things as were not directly necessary to the worship of God. All things in the tabernacle that referred to the way of approach to Him were sprinkled with blood, the exceptions referred to such as had no internal pollution and sin. It was universally established, that whatever referred to the transgression of the moral law and required forgiveness should be cleansed with blood, for without it there was no remission or forgiveness.

The text implies man's need of remission, that this remission or pardon is obtainable, but that it is obtainable only through the shedding of blood.

These are the thoughts we will now endeavour to pursue.

First. The doctrine of the text involves the fact of human guilt, and man's need of mercy. Remission signifies the forgiveness of a debt, or the withdrawal of the sentence of punishment, which has been pronounced upon a convicted offender. We are debtors to the law of God to a large amount, and there is only one alternative, either to pay or to suffer the penalty. This is the only way open to us as sinners, unless the Great Creditor shall remit his claim.

“Die man or justice must, unless for
Him, some willing victim pay the rigid
Satisfaction, death for death.”

We are insolvent, and unable to pay ; and as man's apostacy is universal, there is no exception. If we could find a man not descended from Adam, then we may conclude that his nature was not so degenerate as the rest of his species. But even in that case we should have no proof that such an individual had nothing to be forgiven. In some way, and in some degree, he might yet be a sinner.

Whatever philosophy, falsely so called, may teach, however beautiful and poetic in theory, is founded in error, unless it be in harmonious accordance with the teaching of Scripture. In the pages of infallible truth it is said, that we all like sheep have gone astray, that there is none

righteous, no not one, that there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not, and that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.

And what said Job ? "Behold I am vile, I will lay my hand upon my month." And what said David ? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." And what said Paul ? "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And what said St. John ? "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And what saith conscience ? Does it not convince us of sin ? Men may have different and discordant views of the law and the gospel, and of the way to life, but few are bold enough to deny their criminality altogether. Every man is not *de facto* a rogue, a swindler, a liar, or a libertine, but he "has done those things which he ought not to have done, and left undone those things which he ought to have done." And many an individual whose conduct is fair, honorable, and generous in the sight of man, is but a whited sepulchre before God. We read of some who have a name to live but are dead.

Second. Sin is remissable. It may be pardoned. Forgiveness is attainable. The guilt of sin can be cancelled, and the sentence of condemnation may be repealed.

Upon this ground, *the sacrifices of the law* were instituted. Vile as sin is, and penal as is its desert, the whole system of the Levitical priesthood and its oblations, clearly announced that there was a way yet to be more fully revealed in which the God of heaven can extend mercy to the revolted race of man. Every victim that bled, every sacrifice of blood upon the altar of the tabernacle and temple, was a conclusive testimony to the pardoning grace of God. In itself unable to take away sin, it was significant of the readiness of the offended Deity to remit the penalty incurred when his Son should make Himself an offering for sin by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

The *language of Scripture* is quite decisive on this great question. It tells us that with the Lord there is mercy—that He is ready to forgive—slow to anger—plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Him. It says, “if Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” “He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.” This is a pure doctrine of revelation. Greece and Rome had their temples full of idols,—“gods many and lords many.” There were symbolic representations of every species of vice, and lust, and crime, and cruelty, but a God that represented the attribute of mercy had no place in the heathen pantheon. Well, therefore, might the prophet exclaim,—“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin?”

Scripture facts prove the doctrine which our text includes. In all cases of dispute where evidence alone can decide the question litigated, facts clearly established by unbribed and competent witnesses are received as conclusive. One great palpable fact, affirmed by men whose testimony is above all suspicion, is sufficient to our purpose here. If there were no collateral proof, the mission of Christ into the world as the Prophet and Priest of the Church would be quite enough. The brief record is, that He came to save sinners.

We may also *look at examples*. Sin has been remitted, or forgiven. Paul says, “I obtained mercy.” The penitent thief was pardoned and taken to paradise the same day. Hosts of Corinthians, profligate to a proverb, were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of the Lord. Men whose crimes were as red as scarlet were made white in the blood of the Lamb, and on one day three thousand converts were added to the Church, some of whom had been guilty, either as abettors or perpetrators, of the death of the Son of God. Time

would fail to speak of the many instances which the Scriptures record of the triumphs of the gospel over the heart, and of the moral change which was wrought in the habits of thousands to whom it was the power of God unto salvation. Men who had been a curse became a blessing ; where sin abounded grace much more abounded ; and the most polluted in numerous instances became pure and holy in heart and life.

Third. The text tells us that while sin may be pardoned it is only through the shedding of blood. Some impurities might, under the law, be removed by water and fire, but the stain of sin could be removed only by blood. It was universally true under the Jewish dispensation that in order to the forgiveness of sin blood must be shed. It is no less true under the gospel that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connexion with, and in virtue of the shedding of blood. It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the death of Christ is placed, and on this that God, in fact, bestows remission of sins. It remains to be shewn that one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the blood of expiation. In the divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin which is forgiven, is forgiven through the blood of atonement. It has never been departed from hitherto ; and there is no reason to suppose it ever will.

Of this fact we have ample proof. Wherever there was an approach to God, there was a reference to blood ; and the doctrine may be stated in few words. Death was the penalty annexed to the transgression of the law ; and every transgressor, therefore, was exposed to death. The appointment of sacrifices by the Deity indicated that the sinner for whom they were offered deserved to die, while the sacrifice itself prefigured the *one offering*, which in the fulness of time was to be made for the redemption of both Jews and Gentiles from the curse to which they were legally

liable. As a natural element there could be no connexion between purification and blood. If water had been used the symbol had been natural; but this could not have indicated the desert of man, nor foreshadowed the death of Christ. Through the pages of the New Testament we have repeated proofs that we are reconciled and made nigh to God through the blood of the Cross. As the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, the Father sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world.

This subject shews us the plenitude of divine mercy. There are no bounds to the Saviour's grace. His blood cleanseth from all sin. In virtue of its efficacy He pardons the loftiest mountains of sin as easily as the expansive firmament covers the smallest atom that lies on the surface beneath. But if men are ever saved, they must rely on the merits of the Redeemer's sacrifice. All men are on a level in regard to salvation, since all are to be saved in the same way; and hence there will be one and the same song in heaven, the song of redeeming love.

J. E. EVERITT.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

Revelation ii. 7—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

IN these words, addressed in the first instance to the Church at Ephesus, we have an *admonition*. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This expression occurs at the close of each of the epistles addressed to the seven churches. It corresponds with the form of words commonly employed by the Saviour in His

personal ministry, when He had uttered, or was about to utter something of special importance, which demanded the most serious attention. Thus when He affirmed that John the Baptist was Elias that was to come, He immediately added, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." When He explained the parable of the sower, He uttered the same words. When He disabused the minds of His hearers on the subject of meats and drinks, He used the same admonition ; thus intimating that the religion which God would accept, was not a question of outward service, but the homage of the heart.

"Take heed what ye hear," was one of His divine precepts. In the text, this is defined as "what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This evidently refers to what the Holy Spirit says, who is represented in Scripture as the Source of inspiration, and the Great Teacher who should lead the apostles, and all the humble servants of God into all truth. In the instance before us, the Holy Spirit might be understood as speaking through the Saviour to John, or through John to the churches. In either case it is the same Spirit, and has the same claim upon the attention of his hearers. What He speaks is of general application, and belongs to all. It is addressed, not exclusively to the churches of Asia mentioned by name, but to every man that hath an ear. It concerns all mankind wherever the gospel is preached, and it is of the highest importance that the voice and words of the heavenly Speaker should be regarded as the voice of God, whose words they are.

With these expository remarks, we proceed to consider, *secondly*, what the Spirit says, and to which He summons thus solemnly our attention.

The first point is *the conflict we have to sustain*. "To him that overcometh." The language supposes a conflict and literally means, to him that gaineth the victory, or is a conqueror. It is a moral, and not a carnal warfare that is here intended. It is the contest of the mind with the flesh,

of truth with error, of the spirit with the principles of the world, of faith with unbelief, to which the overcoming refers, and to which the palm of victory will be given. It is applicable to the man who triumphs over his besetting sin, be that sin whatever it may ; to the Christian who overcomes by faith the world and its temptations ; to the believer, who, in the scripture phrase, is valiant for the truth, and triumphs over prevalent errors and unsound doctrine plausibly advocated ; to the man of God, who by faith and prayer soars above the ills and trials of life, as if they assailed him not, so as in all respects to shew that his adherence to truth and duty under all circumstances is firm and unshaken. The principles of evil are so abundant in every man's path ; they meet him in trade, in talk, in social intercourse, and in all the various ramifications of society, that even apart from religion, he who would keep a conscience void of offence and free from guilt, must maintain a contest with the elements of sin in some shape or other. But the Christian life surpasses this. There is an inner conflict, and that is the most trying and severe. The rigid performance of the outward act of service may generally suffice to satisfy the demands of a master upon the obedience of his servant, but the man of God has to look to his motives, to subdue all improper desires, to regulate his affections, and to resist all innate propensities to whatever is impure and unholy. In a word our whole life is a warfare, and the life of the Christian soldier is more especially so. Thousands fall in the conflict with evil, but they who maintain their ground and achieve a victory, shall be received as conquerors and crowned with triumph in the end.

From the conflict we proceed to the *reward*. This is the second thing which the Spirit saith unto the churches, "I will give him to eat of the tree of life." That is, he shall be admitted into heaven, and made partaker of all its satisfactions and joys.

The image here employed to denote the happiness of the future state is beautiful. It is taken from the scene of the garden of Eden, and the phrase "tree of life" is the language in which the tree which stood as the test of man's obedience in the midst of the literal paradise, is described as that which should make the life of man perpetual, if he partook of its fruits.

By examining the Scriptures on this subject we come to the conclusion that this especial tree was designed as a type or emblem of the Saviour. To shew that all kinds of life are treasured up in Christ, He is compared even to those things which have vegetable life, and is called *the tree of life*. Both good and wicked men are, in Scripture, compared to trees. "The godly shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in season." On the other hand, the wicked are called barren and unfruitful trees, whose fruit withereth, or is sour and bad. The aptness of this comparison is obvious, as no object in nature is more beautiful and valuable than a fine tree, and few are more unsightly than one stunted and decayed. The life of a tree is longer than that of animals or human beings. When the Lord promised long life and prosperity to His people, He said, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

In the garden of Eden were two trees of very solemn significance—the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The former was a natural means of prolonging man's life, and a sacramental pledge of his continuance in that life, on condition of his perfect obedience. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was so called, because by eating of its fruit man came to know experimentally the vast difference between good and evil—the greatness of the good he had lost, and the load of evil he had brought upon himself by the feeling it; and this was another sacramental pledge which, in case of disobedience, sealed him up in death, spiritual, temporal, eternal.

In the book of Proverbs it is used to denote Christ Himself. Thus, wisdom is mentioned as a symbol and type of the Saviour. "She," that is wisdom, "is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." When our Lord is compared to a tree it is always to a fruit tree, a tree for meat, a vine, or an apple tree. Many trees are useful and ornamental for their shade alone; and in a sultry climate they are almost necessary; but the Son of God, the true Tree of life, combines both shade and fruit.

In the 47th chapter of Ezekiel a vision of the prophet is described exactly similar to that of John in the last chapter of the Revelation; thus shewing that it was the same Tree that was seen by the prophet of the Old Testament and the apostle of the New. It is of little consequence whether we understand it of Christ Himself, or of the blessings He conveys. In either sense it represents the several parts of His mediatorial rank; the sufficiency of His salvation to complete the felicity of His people; the plenteous provisions of the Gospel, the precious promises of the Sacred Word, and the life of the soul communicated by Him.

The situation of the tree of life is also particularly named. As John saw the Saviour under the character of the Lamb in the midst of the throne, so he describes the Tree of life as in the midst of the Paradise of God. The word paradise is of oriental derivation, and is used to denote a garden, or park, or pleasure ground around the residences of Persian monarchs and princes. We therefore are wont to apply the word to Eden, as a beautiful and cultivated spot. As it is used in Scripture, it denotes the heavenly world, because of its verdure, fragrance, and glory. And the position occupied by the Saviour there, seems intended to shew us that He is seen, known, accessible to all; hidden, excluded from none.

There is, however, one idea suggested by these words which

we must not overlook. While man continued holy he might have eaten the fruit of the Tree of Life ; but when he had become a sinner, and the sentence of death was passed upon him, he was forbidden to eat of that tree. What was proper in a state of innocence was improper in a state of guilt. He was, therefore, driven from the garden, and the way was guarded by the flaming sword of the Cherubim. But now, he that shall overcome the world by faith shall be received into a paradise that sin can never blight. The prohibition not to taste of the immortal Tree is recalled, and man may now—even now in this world, stretch forth his hand and pluck the fruit of life. And in the Paradise regained, the blessings of the Paradise lost will be more than recovered, for the believer may now live for ever in a far higher and more happy state than his would have been in Eden—a Paradise into which the tempter can never enter, disobedience never blight, the curse never darken :—

“ Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers.”

Such is the promise. It is not of *debt* but of grace. I will *give* is the solemn engagement of the faithful of God.

W. PAGE.

HOPE IN CHRIST.

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1 Cor. xv. 19.—“ *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*”

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SUCH is the conclusion to which the apostle comes, in his argument for the importance of the resurrection of Christ. The Jews disbelieved the resurrection of the Messiah whom

they had crucified ; and the Sadduces denied the doctrine of the resurrection altogether. St. Paul therefore concedes one point, namely, that if the dead rise not—then Christ was not risen. And if this were the case, it would follow, that the preaching of Christ was vain—that the apostle and all others who had testified that Christ was raised up, were false witnesses—that the faith of believers was a vain faith—that all mankind are yet in their sins—and that all who had fallen asleep, that is, who had died, in the belief of the gospel, had perished ; their faith was a delusion, and they had died in their error, unsaved.

And from this view of the argument he deduces the inference in the text, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ ;” that is to say—“If our hope will not be followed by the resurrection of the dead, and future glory, “we are of all men most miserable”—the words literally rendered are—*most to be pitied*.

There seems, at first sight, some difficulty in these words. It is therefore important that they should be explained as to their true meaning. The text embraces two ideas ; one implied, the other expressed. It is implied—that Christians have hope in Christ ; it is said—that if there be no hereafter, no resurrection of Christ, and no resurrection of His followers—then are they of all the human family in the most pitiable condition. Let us endeavour to make both these points apparent.

I. The Christian is the subject of hope. He has hope in Christ, that is to say, he hopes for salvation through Christ. Hence the apostle speaks of Christ as our hope—and Christ in us the hope of glory—and also of a good hope through grace. St. Peter describes Christians as being begotten again unto a lively hope ; while St. John says—Every man who hath this hope in Him—that is in Christ, purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

There is no one element of the mind more sustaining than hope. In the darkest scenes, it throws some rays of

relief upon the gloomy path. While the current of life flows smoothly along, while the sun of prosperity gilds our path, we feel little anxiety with respect to the future : but when the vital stream begins to stagnate, when the shadows of the declining sun are lengthening on every side, when the darkening horizon announces the near approach of storm and tempest, then the value of hope becomes apparent.

The object of hope is future good—something that appears desirable in the opinion of the individual. No man hopes for anything that he accounts evil. It is evident also that this object must be future. “For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” True, indeed, this future good may be never enjoyed. It may be based on an insecure foundation, and be ultimately disappointed. “The hope of the hypocrite shall perish, and his trust be as the spider’s web.”

Objects of incomparable excellence are embraced by Christian hope. Imagination cannot conceive the magnitude of that good which God hath laid up for them that fear Him, and wrought for them that trust in Him before the sons of men. All the blessings of the new covenant constitute the legitimate objects of this Christian grace. It anticipates complete deliverance from sin, and the unbounded possession of every thing that is great, and good, and satisfying. It looks forward to those things that are unseen and eternal ; to victory over the last enemy ; to an entrance ministered abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour ; to the perfection of all the powers and faculties of the renewed nature, and the gratification of every holy desire in the presence of God and the Lamb. It rejoices in the protection of the dust of the corruptible body which rests in hope ; in the prospect of the final triumph of the Saviour over death and the grave, when He will liberate the long detained captives, reanimate the mortal part of His redeemed, and form them powerful, beautiful, incorruptible, glorious like Himself. This heavenly principle stretches its

pinions into the unmeasured field of eternity ; and rivers of pleasure, and a fulness of joy are the blessings it contemplates. To see Christ as He is—to be made like Him—to spend an eternity in His presence and in the enjoyment of His love—this is a felicity so great and glorious, that nothing compared with it deserves the name of great and good.

II. Observe the alternative. If there be no resurrection—no future world—no state of glory—if all this hope is destined to disappointment—what then ? Why that we are in a most deplorable condition—more to be pitied than any other class of the human family.

Let us see, *first*, how this applies to the apostles. Under the dangers and trials to which they were exposed, nothing could sustain them but the hope of immortality. If they failed in that, they failed in everything. They were regarded as deluded men—in some cases as imposters ; they suffered more bitter persecution than others ; they endured more poverty and reproach, more contempt and oppression ; and if after all, they were deceived, and would finally be disappointed, their condition was more to be deplored and pitied than that of the mass of mankind at large. This would arise from several considerations. We may remark that they were more subjected to trials than any other class of men ; they were persecuted, reviled, exposed to privation and want on account of their religion ; and if after all they were to be disappointed, their situation was to be commiserated indeed.

Moreover, they did not indulge in the pleasures of sense, or give themselves (as others did) to the enjoyments of the world. Under a deep and solemn impression of duty, they subjected themselves to self-denial, and to sacrifices not agreeable to flesh and blood. If therefore they are not admitted to eternal life, seeing upon stern and high principle they are cut off from those sources of happiness which their fellow men enjoy, their condition is sad indeed.

And in addition to this, no other men had such elevated

hopes as had they; and of course no others could experience a disappointment equal to theirs, if their enjoyments were bounded by this life, and all beyond was a fable. The conclusion is inevitable. If they suffered trials of cruel mockings, of want, of contempt, and all for nought, no condition can be conceived more deplorable than was that of St. Paul and his brethren.

But how does this apply to Christians in our day? With some degree of modification the sentiment is true. The conclusion which the apostle draws from the sufferings and tears of the followers of Christ on the assumption which the sceptic affirmed that there was to be no resurrection, does not mean that a course of faith and piety is not attended with happiness; it does not mean that even if there were no future state a man would not be more happy if he walked in the fear of God than if he lived a life of sin; it does not mean that the Christian has no happiness in religion itself,—in the love of God, and in prayer, praise and purity of life. No, that the apostle cannot mean. In all this he has enjoyment; and even if there were no heaven, a life of virtue and piety would be more happy than a life of sin. But the passage means, that the condition of the Christian would be more sorrowful and pitiable than that of those who expect nothing, hope for nothing beyond the present world. All his high hopes would be disappointed, if there be no heaven. Other men have not such hopes to be dashed to the ground; and therefore were not such objects of pity and compassion as are they who take up the cross for the sake of a crown that they would never wear.

Such is the argument of St. Paul in the text. It is the last link in the strong chain of evidence which he adduces in support of the grand doctrine of the resurrection and a future state. To the Christian it presents a most delightful prospect of certain happiness when he has done with the present world. He must indeed die like other men; but his death is a sleep—a calm, gentle, undisturbed sleep in

the expectation of being awakened to a bright and everlasting day. He has the assurance that his Saviour rose, and that because He lives, he shall live also. He may have to encounter peril and privation; persecution and shame; he may be ridiculed and despised; he may be doomed to martyrdom at the stake, but he has the assurance that before him there is a world of eternal glory. Have you lost a good child—a Christian friend? You shall see him again—not pale and corruptible as when you saw him last; but radiant and fair as the face of an angel, beautified with the bloom of immortality, and glowing with affection and joy.

JOHN DICKINSON.

LIFE AND LIGHT.

John i. 4 5.—“*In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.*”

IN these words we have three things brought before our attention on which we would meditate at this time. The first two respect the Saviour—the last the treatment He received from the world. He is the Life—that Life is the Light of men—and though it shone with peculiar lustre, the mass of mankind received it not.

I. We have to study the Lord Jesus as the *Life*. God only is *the Life* properly so called, and no other being hath a life of its own, independent and undenied. He is the first *Cause* of existence; therefore in Him, all things, whether spiritual or material, have their being. Thus the Father is said to have life in Himself: and of Christ as

God it is also said that in Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. He likewise proclaimed Himself most expressly in the same character when He said at the grave of Lazarus—"I am the Life." The same is also affirmed of the Holy Ghost, who is called "The Spirit of Life;" and the designation is sustained by the exercise of this attribute by Him, in that He quickens the soul that was dead in trespasses and sins.

But what is Life? There are various kinds of Life bestowed on creatures by the Creator. There is the life of *Angels*, an immortal and purely spiritual existence; there is the life of *man*, a rational and spiritual union of body and soul, the one giving life, consciousness, perception, feeling, sensation to the other. There is the life of *animals*, a body without a soul, but animated by a spirit, in many cases, of a sagacity approaching reason. And lower still, there is the life of *vegetables*. Nothing is more certain, than that even the lowest of these kinds of life, it is not in the power of man to bestow. No one of the human species can give to a blade of grass or to an insect of the day, its vital existence, any more than he can give immortality to an angel.

But the question yet to be answered is—What is Life? Now the truth is, that man can no more literally define it, than he can bestow it. Philosophers have told us, that "life is motion"—or a power to move and do the actions of life. But this tells us little more, than that life is the power to live—in short that life is life. As this, however, is all we know respecting it, we must be content with this definition, till we are raised to a higher state of existence, where we shall know as we are known.

But the Scriptures tell us, that "Christ is our Life." This must be something distinct from mere animal being. The heathen live who know not Christ. That life we derive from Christ is a spiritual element, by which the soul is made alive to God; grace and glory are the same life

with this difference, that the one is the beginning, the other the perfection; the one is the commencement and the pledge of the other.

There is some degree of analogy between the natural and the spiritual life. There is an innate power to move, and the senses of the mind are exercised to discern good and evil. The *eye* is opened to see the beauty of holiness, the *ear* to hear the glad sound of the gospel, and the *heart* to taste, and feel, and relish the blessings of salvation. It is therefore said, so great is the change in all the spiritual affections when thus quickened, that we are new creatures. There is an inward, a mental, a sort of instinctive desire for the food that is nourishing to the soul; and there is an instinctive aversion to what is hurtful to it. In short, the moral nature of man has begun a new existence—"old things are passed away, and all things are become new," but to another we can no more explain the new life itself, than we can that which is natural. This we know that the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, makes the Christian free from the law of sin and death. That law was *condemnation* and *unregeneracy*, from the first we are free at once when we believe, from the other we become gradually free by the sanctifying influence of the truth upon the heart; and thus we are disciplined and made meet for the eternal life in the paradise of God.

II. Christ is our Light. His Life was the Light of men, and He when announcing Himself as the Light of the world, styles this light as "the Light of Life."

Nothing is more familiar to us than natural light, yet nothing is more inexplicable. If it be difficult to say with precision what *life* is, it is no less so to say "What *Light* is." Its extreme velocity, moving, as is computed, at the rate of ten or eleven millions of miles in a minute of time; the inconceivable minuteness of its particles, which, notwithstanding their speed, makes them fall upon the tender eye-ball with a sensation, not of pain, but of pleasure; the

various colours of which it is composed, so blended as to produce one pure, colourless medium; its innumerable changes and varieties, and the adaptation of our organs of sight to every change—these, and many more considerations, render light one of the most astonishing wonders of creation.

Not only is God the Father represented under this emblem, but it is peculiarly applied to Immanuel, God our Saviour; and this in various forms and modifications. He is styled “The True Light—the Light of men—Light of the world—a Light to lighten the Gentiles—the day-spring from on high—the morning star—a star out of Jacob—the Sun of Righteousness.”

The moral condition of the world is that of darkness. From the time when Adam sinned, man was the child of error, ignorance, and uncertainty. The account of his state in the Scripture is very affecting. He fell into the darkness of separation from God, “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in him, because of the blindness of his heart.” And so inveterate is this fearful revulsion, that our Lord says—“This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

It was to reverse this dismal state of the world, and disperse the gloom and ignorance that brooded over the face of the earth, that the Saviour came as the prophet of the Lord, to bring life and immortality to light, to make darkness light and crooked things straight, and to open the prison doors to them that are bound. He reveals in His gospel the way of salvation, and is the way, the truth, and the Life. When He came as the Light of life, He sustained the character of a *Liberator*. Not only was He to open the blind eyes, He was at the same time to say to the prisoners—“Go forth;” and to them that were in darkness, “Shew yourselves.” Any light that could have reached

fallen man, without this wonderful work of redemption, would but have resembled the sickly lamp of the dungeon, which serves to shew the wretched inmate the instruments of torture, the massive walls and iron bolts which make all hope of escape desperate, and too plainly tell that none can quit the horrible abode but to be led to execution.

Beautiful is the combination of emblems by which the Redeemer's character is portrayed : and the symbol of light is one of the most significant. "Whatever doth make manifest is light." How little idea can we form of objects by the hearing of the ear compared with the sight of the eye! All the information we can obtain of them through any other medium, conveys but a defective knowledge of their structure and size. Let them become visible, and we gain at once some estimate of their nature. Then as to *security*, we all know that danger attends us in the dark. Our path may lead beside no precipice, no pitfall, nor swollen river or deceitful swamp, yet we may stumble over the inequality of its surface, and sustain injury. And if it be difficult to walk safely in the dark, it is impossible in most cases to *work* in the dark. Our Lord says—"In the night no man can work." All the arts and sciences, of business, trade, domestic occupation, must stand still at the approach of night, did not He who formed the Sun in the firmament, supply us also artificial lights to compensate in some measure for His absence. All this and much more, the Saviour is to His people. He is wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption to the soul that confides in Him for salvation.

III. The apostle records a melancholy fact with respect to this Light. He tells us—"That the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

There is here a reference, in the first instance, to the Jews, and to their rejection of Christ. The Saviour came to teach them, to be their Life and Light, but they received Him not. It was so when He sent His prophets, and it

was so during His own ministry. His efforts to enlighten and save men were like light struggling to penetrate a dark dense cloud ; and though a few rays may pierce the gloom, yet the great mass is still an impenetrable shade.

It is said the darkness *comprehended* it not. The word with us, means to understand. This is not the meaning of the original, which signifies to admit or receive. The darkness did not admit or receive the rays of light ; or to drop the symbol, men were so ignorant, so debased, so sunk in vice and guilt, that they did not appreciate the value of our Lord's instructions, and the prediction was fulfilled—"He is despised and rejected of men."

And what is the case now ? There are some who receive the Saviour's teachings, and are enlightened by Him—"made wise unto salvation"—but the mass reject the gospel as a practical system. Sin always blinds the mind to the beauty and excellency of the character both of Christ and His doctrine. It indisposes the mind to receive the word of life, just as darkness has no affinity for light, and if the one be introduced the other must retire.

In conclusion, let me press the inquiry—Hath God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts ? It is said by an apostle—"If any man say, he hath fellowship with God, and walketh in darkness, he lieth, and doeth not the truth." This is the text. No man who walketh in the darkness of unbelief, of sinful habits, of carnal indulgence, of wilful disobedience, of worldly impurity, has any fellowship with God. Let us take heed, lest we reject "the true light," as did the Jews, to our eternal ruin.

J. E. EVERETT.

ON WEAK FAITH.

Matthew xiv. 31.—“*And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*”

ON the east side of the lake of Genesaret, the Saviour had miraculously fed “five thousand men beside women and children”—so that it is probable the whole number was little short of ten thousand. This was not only a stupendous miracle, but an act of great benevolence. The effect was such as might be expected. St. John says, that the multitude was so convinced by it that Jesus was the Messiah, the King that they had so long expected as to induce them to take Him by force and make Him a king. To avoid this, the Saviour privately retired to a solitary mountain for secret prayer—an example for all who would shut out the world and its temptations from their minds, and escape the snares of pride and vain glory.

The disciples having entered into a ship with a view to pass over to the opposite coast, were now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves : for the wind was contrary. One of the evangelists says, that they had sailed about twenty-five or thirty furlongs. This would be about four miles ; and as this lake or branch of the sea, was at no place more than ten miles in breadth, they were now literally in the midst of the sea. In the fourth watch of the night, called the morning watch, as it commenced at three and ended at six in the morning, Jesus appeared, walking on the sea. The sight was remarkable. It was a boisterous sea, and the form of a man, as yet in the dim dawn of the day, but indistinctly seen, walking erect amidst the tumultuous billows, struck them with awe. The notion of the ancients, that the spirits of men after death frequently appeared to the living, seems to have been com-

mon to the disciples, and they, in their agitation, supposing that they saw a spirit, cried out for fear. But the Saviour, with that kindness and pity which reigned in His heart, immediately addressed them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

It is now that the scene recorded in the text was about to open. The natural and characteristic ardour and rashness of Peter were strikingly displayed on the occasion. He immediately desired permission to come and meet his Lord on the swelling wave. His request was granted. It was a rash, impulsive and incautious request, but the Saviour permitted it to shew Peter, that although he had some faith, yet it would not be equal to the trial. The disciple seems to have thought that his faith was really stronger than it was. It was not for him to imitate his Master in this supernatural act, and the best way to shew him that he had more ardour than discretion was to allow him to make the experiment. Peter therefore descended from the side of the little vessel, and soon learnt his danger. He cried for help, saying, Lord save me. He knew that the sea was billowy and the wind boisterous; but he appears to have forgotten this till he found himself sinking. Had he been called to the act by the will of his Lord, he would have stood firm amidst the most foamy surge. But presumption—not faith—had brought him into the situation—and thus he was taught his own character and his dependence on Christ—a lesson which the Christian is frequently required to learn by dear-bought experience.

The relief he implored was instantly granted. "Jesus immediately stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Thus we see, the compassion of Christ, in unison with His sovereign power. It is a wholesome lesson, and teaches us, that in every difficulty we must repose confidence in Christ, our Almighty Saviour and friend, who will ever help in time of need.

But with deliverance, the Saviour administers a gentle rebuke. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" This rebuke we shall now proceed to consider. Quitting the narrative in the text, we will look at the doubting Christian, and observe what there is *good* and what there is *evil* in his little faith.

First—there is a measure of something good and hopeful even in the existence of doubts. Even a Christian may have weak faith with respect to the completeness of the gospel salvation, and of his own individual interest in it. In this respect the mere worldling, who has no thoughts beyond this present life, differs from him. Whatever are his anxieties and fears, they are confined to the things seen and temporal. But he who has been awakened to the real importance of the things that are unseen and eternal; who is enlightened in the knowledge of his own sinfulness and of the holiness and justice of God, may be a prey to painful anxiety on the subject of his personal salvation. He thinks of himself as a sinner, and he trembles. He thinks of God as an avenging judge, and he is troubled. He is conscious of his desert, and he is afraid. He cannot realize the pardon of his sins, or the imputation of the righteousness of Christ for his justification. Every view of his personal condition as a sinner, increases his alarm; and the promises of God bring him small consolation. On the point of confidence he fails. He is directed to cast all his care upon God, but he wants faith, and cannot do it. He is commanded by divine authority by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let his request be known unto God, and he is promised a peace that passeth all understanding that would keep his heart and mind. But this he cannot do. He therefore loses the blessing. He has a little faith, a little strength, and therefore doubts and fears prevail.

Secondly. This state of mind is one of great impediment to the advancement and comfort of the Christian character. It is fatal to all improvement in the divine life. It de-

teriorates the character of a Christian and holds him in iron bondage.

As a *child* of God, the doubter debars himself from the privileges of his sonship. He denies himself the right of the children's bread, and refuses to taste their joys. He walks not in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and therefore fears to cherish that spirit of adoption, whereby as an heir of the family he may cry—"Abba Father."

As a *servant* of God, he groans under a perpetual bondage, and knows by experience nothing of that perfect freedom wherewith Christ makes His people free. He doubts the love of his Master, and stands in awe of His displeasure.

As a Christian *warrior*, he hesitates to take the field. He shrinks from a determined conflict with the flesh, the world, and the devil. Instead of placing himself under the banners of the "Captain of our salvation," and fighting the good fight of faith, he yields to the feeling of his own weakness. He looks not for help from above, and he is discouraged by the anticipation of failure and defeat.

Or if we look upon the doubting Christian as a *pilgrim* travelling to a better country, he appears with halting step, and fainting spirit. His progress onward to the rest that remaineth to the people of God, is slow, now advancing a step and then slipping back. The prospect of the termination of his journey affords him no pleasure. He fears that there will be no welcome extended to him in the mansions of his father's house. He cannot adopt the triumphant language of St. Paul—"For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Thirdly. Doubts are not only detrimental to our Christian character and comfort, but displeasing to God. This is evident from the words of our Lord to Peter—"O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

It is not the will of God that any of His family should

be harrassed with anxious thoughts, and tormented with fearful forebodings. All His children are objects of His parental love and care. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," is the sweet promise of our Lord, and no one may mistake His meaning. It is, when put into other words, as if He had said—"Believe on me with all your heart. Throw your fears to the wind. Dishonour me not by suspecting my willingness to pardon, to protect, to bless you. Only come to me, and your weary aching heart shall find rest. I will relieve you of the heavy burden of your cares and anxieties. I will chase away your painful apprehensions. I will cheer you with my presence, strengthen you with my arm, give you grace sufficient for your duties, feed you with the hidden manna of heaven, and bring you finally to my eternal kingdom. All you have to do, is to come to me, for this is the rest and the refreshing."

The whole tenor of the gospel dispensation sustains the point under consideration. The entire work of the Son of God is based upon this consoling fact. He was predicted as one who should *publish peace*. The whole fabric of Christian doctrine may be designated "the gospel of peace." The first note that the angels sung at the incarnation was—"on earth peace." The legacy of Christ was peace. His farewell sermon closes with the assurance—"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace." And the ministry of the apostles was of the same kind—"preaching peace by Jesus Christ."

And now, Christian brethren, wherefore do ye doubt? Why walk in sadness, robbed of your joy, and burthened with anxieties? Why doubt any more the love of Christ, or your interest in it? Be of good cheer. Let no prospect of outward suffering induce you to fear. Let no anticipation of trials that may or may not arise, sink your spirits. The arm that rescued Peter from being swallowed up by the gurgling wave is not shortened, but mighty to save all that put their trust in it.

BP. MOORE.

CORRECTION IN JUDGMENT.

Jeremiah x. 24.—“ *O Lord, correct me but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*”

THESE words were spoken by the prophet on the following occasion. The Lord was about to inflict some heavy chastisement on the Jewish Church and people for their sins. Great rebellion and idolatry prevailed throughout the nation. All ranks forgot the Lord, and provoked Him to wrath by their worship of idols. The pastors, whose solemn office it was to warn the people of their ways, and endeavour to bring them back to the knowledge and service of the true God, were themselves ignorant of Him. They did not even seek His grace, either to have mercy upon themselves, or to endue them with wisdom and strength to reclaim the people. Nay, what is worse; they were the means of leading them more astray, and of bringing down those corrections in a severer degree, with which the Lord had threatened to overwhelm them. “The pastors are become brutish,” saith the prophet; “and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper; and all their flocks shall be scattered.”

For this general wickedness, the Lord was about to suffer their enemies for awhile to triumph over them. It would be a grievous calamity. For seventy years the land should be desolate. Still, however, even in ungodly Israel, the Lord had a remnant; but for their good He would permit them to be carried away with the rest. The prophet is here representing them. He prays that, while the Lord corrected him with the bulk of the nation, He would correct them with judgment; that He would remember they were His people; that He would not suffer His vengeance to fall

upon them as upon others, for they could not stand before Him if He did so. If fury must be poured out, let the heathen that knew Him not, the families that called not on His name, feel it ; but let His own people be spared : or if they must be chastised, let it be as a father corrects his children, that they might return to obedience, duty, and love.

The words thus introduced, will lead us to consider some truths of great importance to us all.

First. We learn from the passage, that the people of God must expect to be corrected for their sins.

Corrections are as certainly promised to Christians, as the salvation of the soul. "I will correct thee in measure saith the Lord, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished." "In the world ye shall have tribulation," says the Saviour. And of the multitude that John saw in heaven, the elder with whom he conversed told him—"These are they that come out of great tribulation." "He that spareth the rod, hateth his child." In all ages the people of God have been known as an afflicted people. Abraham, Job, David, the prophets, and even Christ Himself, the holy one of God passed under the rod, and learned obedience by the things that they suffered.

But why this correction ? Is it an arbitrary appointment ? By no means. It is a most wise and gracious design in the covenant of mercy, for *the good of the soul*. It has compelled many to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; for before I was afflicted I went astray." Some, indeed, are incorrigible under the correcting hand of God ; and their impenitency herein ultimately proves an awful aggravation of their guilt. If we will neither fear the rod, nor Him that hath appointed it, our corrections as well as our sins will, in the last day, testify against us.

But why this correction ? We reply—for *the conversion of the soul*. Why did the Lord chastise Manasseh, the cruel king of Judah ? Why did He send him away into an

enemy's land ; and there permit him to be cast into prison ? The issue shews the reason. It was, that there, in that very prison, the heart of the royal captive might be turned to the Lord, and that there he might seek and find mercy for his heinous transgressions.

But why does the rod of correction fall upon Christians ? We answer—*To wean the heart from self-righteousness.* Job had been betrayed into a very blameable degree of self-justification. Though an eminent believer, he trusted too much to his works, and placed his confidence in an undue measure upon his own integrity. But the Lord intended to bring him off from such vain hopes, and by stripping him of all outward comforts, to shew him the folly of depending on an arm of flesh. He is therefore taught his vileness and sin ; and at length he acquiesces in the hard but wholesome and necessary lesson, that he who trusteth his own heart is not wise, and that the Lord alone can be sufficient support to the soul.

To make *the backslider sensible of his guilt*, is another reason we might assign for the use of the correcting rod. The experience of David supplies us with an instance. Many were his trials. They flowed in upon him from every quarter. In his family, his kingdom, his associates and friends, he felt the chastening hand of God. He had backslidden, he had fallen, and although he confessed his sin unto the Lord, and was pardoned, he should not go altogether unpunished.

Moreover the corrections of Christians are designed to prepare them *for greater mercies, and for future glory.* Why did the Lord permit St. Paul to be tried, persecuted, and opposed in his benevolent exertions for the salvation of man ? He says—"Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Precious would the rest of heaven be to his tempted and weary spirit ! With what ardent delight would he who, while he was here, was often perplexed,

though not in despair ; often cast down ; though not destroyed, bathe in those rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand for evermore ! With what exquisite joy would the soul, that here went on its way often weeping, and sorrowing over its guilt and depravity, participate in the happiness of that serene and sacred abode, where God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more crying, or sorrow, or pain ! Welcome be the correction that makes us meet for such a place !

Secondly. The text suggests, that should the Lord correct His people in anger, they must perish before Him, or as the prophet says—be brought to nothing.

“The Lord Most High is terrible.” If His wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, who can abide the day of His coming ? Hence David no less than Jeremiah cries, “O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy sore displeasure.” Both were persuaded, that, if the righteous Governor of the world should visit them in His wrath, their spirits would fail before Him. The stoutest heart must tremble at His reproof. The most fearless must be filled with dismay, if they fall into the hands of the living God.

Look at the old world ; could *that* abide the day of His anger and the rod of His indignation ? The whole race of man was swept away, save the little remnant sheltered in the ark ! Look again at Sodom ; could its lewd and guilty inhabitants withstand the torrents of fire from heaven ? All, save the family of Lot, were destroyed without remedy. Look again at Pharaoh and his mighty hosts ; could they endure the rod of the Lord's anger ? Miserably did they perish in the waters of the Red Sea. And what became of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ? “The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up ; and they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them.” And what became of the host of Assyria against whom the anger of Heaven was kindled ?

In one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand souls were transmitted from time into eternity, with all their guilt upon their heads !

Brethren, let me speak plainly and freely to you on this subject. Are you hardened, impenitent, unbelieving, reckless of all consequences? Oh ! be assured "your sins will find you out." A day of correction will certainly come, and without an interest in Christ, how will you escape? What will flattering delusions and false hopes then avail you? "What will you do when God riseth up, and when He visiteth what will you answer Him?" Prepare your cause. Bring forth your strong reasons, for behold ! the Judge appeareth. Thousands of saints and angels grace His advent. The judgment is set, the books are opened, and small and great stand before God! It is the day of vengeance on His adversaries. What can a world do wrapt in flames—what can wicked companions involved in the same condemnation with yourselves—do for you then? What will foolish hopes and creature props profit then? Alas ! every prop will snap, every refuge of lies be swept away. Come, O come to Christ. Build your soul upon Him. Seek an interest in His blood, righteousness and redemption ; and then, when the rain shall descend, the winds blow, and the floods come and dash against you, you shall stand; for you then will be found upon a rock.

Thirdly. The text contains the prayer of an awakened and contrite soul, that God would correct him with judgment, and not in anger.

The word *judgment* is here used in the sense of discernment, in the same manner as in the seventh Psalm. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day:" that is, He observes and regards the way of His servants, but His indignation burns against the ungodly and the sinner. St. Paul uses the word in the same signification: "He that is spiritual judgeth all things," that is, he discerns and has a spiritual perception of the things of

God. When the prophet cries, "O Lord correct me but with judgment," he prays that the Lord would correct him with discernment; that is, that He would remember that he was but dust, and so temper the chastisement with wisdom, love, and mercy, that instead of crushing him it may make him a more humble and dutiful child, and a more faithful and devoted servant. Such a frame of mind is a high attainment, and a most gracious blessing. The petitioner deprecates not correction; he rather invites it, as the salutary discipline of a wise and merciful Father, but not as punishment inflicted by an offended and angry Judge.

There are certain seasons when this prayer is peculiarly suitable and proper.

1. When the mind is deeply humbled before God under a sense of guilt and misery. To this state, with more or less anguish, every sinner is brought, sooner or later, before he tastes the joys of God's salvation. And with such feelings in the breast, what shall he do? There is but one refuge, one hiding place. Christ is that refuge—that hiding place. But will He receive such an one? The promise says, Yes, He will. Now then the soul may cry—"O Lord, I justly deserve thy wrath, but remember thy word, thy promise, thy mercy, and deal with me in judgment for thine own honour and truth." Can such a soul perish? Heaven and earth may pass away; but the word that pledges salvation to such pleading sinners shall never fail.

2. The supplication in the text is suitable to every returning backslider. Even when the Lord hath had mercy upon us, and we have tasted that He is gracious, the heart is still prone to wander, and by little and little, to depart from the God of love. Too often does he, who was once watchful, slumber at his post of duty, and droop in his heavenly race. Prayer becomes a task, and praise an irksome burden. Too frequently does he, who once seemed bold and decided like Peter, begin to follow the Lord at a distance, and shrink back so far again to the world, as hardly to be discerned

from the ungodly mass around. May not the Lord cast off such backsliding souls? May He not leave them to perish."

But awakened to see their guilt and danger, here again is the time for this prayer—"O Lord correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." True, I deserve to perish, but thy dear Son is the Saviour of sinners. For His sake, "pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." I crave thy mercy in His name; and entreat thee to restore my soul to the paths of righteousness and peace. Thou didst forgive Ephraim when he renounced his idols, shew the same mercy to me! Thou didst pardon Israel in the wilderness who had ungratefully rebelled against Thee, and backslidden from thy ways; yet at the intercession of Moses, according to the greatness of thy mercy, thou didst forgive their iniquity; for the sake of Jesus Christ my heavenly advocate, deal with me as with Israel when returning to thy footstool, and say unto my soul—"I will heal thy backsliding; I will love thee freely; for mine anger is turned away from thee. Such "praying breath shall not be spent in vain."

3. In the prospect, or under the pressure of any temporal calamity, we shall need the use of this prayer. Afflictions, crosses, disappointments, bereavements, loss of means, substance, the misconduct of children, pain, suffering—are some of the rods which the Lord uses for correction. If Jonah takes too much delight in his gourd, a worm will be sent to gnaw its root, and cause it to wither. The Father of mercies sees that His people are not to be trusted with much ease or prosperity; and that a rough and afflictive path is more for their welfare, than to walk in the way of worldly sunshine and smile. And hence, when anticipating some approaching trial, or when that trial has come, they are led to pray for deliverance from it, or for grace to bear it. This was precisely the case with the prophet before us. The Jews had been threatened with a seventy years captivity, long before it came to pass. The consequence

was, the prophet in his own name and on behalf of the true Israel, poured out the supplication which has formed the subject of our present address, and which is befitting for us all under the chastising hand of our heavenly Father.

Strange that the gift of a Saviour—the death of the Son of God—the promises of mercy and love, are not sufficient to bind our hearts to Him, but that we need the rod of correction also ! Well may this thought humble us deeply before Him !

R. W. ALTON.

EPISTLES OF CHRIST.



2 Cor. iii. 3.—“ *Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.*”



THE mission of the Holy Spirit, this day brought before our notice, was distinctly promised by our blessed Lord, and fully realized by the apostles and assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost. The design of His mission was both special and general. One part of it was to confirm the disciples and the earliest followers of Christ in their faith of Him as the Saviour of prophecy : also to dry up their tears at His departure, and to lead them into all truth, that they might be qualified to preach the gospel in all its fulness and power.

But the mission of the Spirit was also indicative of the New Dispensation, as opposed to the one that was now superseded. *That* was typical and external—*this* is spiri-

tual and internal. *That* was shadowy—*this* is substantial. The first was a system of ceremonial services, the present is a moral empire; “the kingdom of heaven consisteth not in meat and drink, but of joy, and peace, and the Holy Ghost.” The law given by Moses was glorious, but its glory is lost in “the glory that excelleth.” And St. Paul in this chapter tells us, that the veil is now taken away, and Christians “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

The *special* influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of the apostles was limited to them. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. All that was supernatural died with them. The truth had taken root, and the props that supported its branches were removed. But there is a *general* manifestation of the Holy Spirit which abides in the Church for ever, and by which the gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Such is the subject suggested in the text. St. Paul had been assailed by false teachers at Corinth; and unsparing insinuations had been circulated against his apostleship. He had brought no letters of introduction with him from other churches, and this was made the ground of suspicion by those who wished to undermine his character and weaken his authority. This ungenerous attack upon his name and ministry he repels by pointing to the fruits of his labours. He regarded their conversion as a letter of credit that superseded the need of any written document in his behalf. By the effect of his preaching he considered that they were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ—that is to say, their conversion from heathenism to the faith was the testimonial of Christ sent to them and to the world as a letter of recommendation. They had been begotten again by the ministry of the gospel, and that was at once the most ample and conclusive evidence, the highest and best attes-

tation that the minister was no impostor but the honoured servant of God. This letter had not been written with ink—by words drawn on a lifeless substance, and in lines that easily fade, or that may become illegible, or that can be read only by a few, or that may be lost or destroyed—but with the spirit of the living God moving upon their heart, and producing that manifest change which constitutes the only proof of its regeneration. It was therefore a more valuable, precious and permanent epistle than the pen of man ever wrote; and was a more undoubted proof that God had sent the apostle and his coadjutors than any letter written with ink could be. It was written also, not on tables of stone as those on which the law was engraved, but in fleshly tables of the heart, and therefore more valuable than any inscription on stone. No hand but that of God could reach the heart and inscribe the truths of Christianity there. And it was not a mere dead letter. The hardest stone would moulder, time would corrode even the brazen monument, but not so the impression which was made upon man's inner nature. *That* would abide for ever. It would live in other worlds, and shed its influence over all the ages of eternity.

Such is a brief exposition of the passage before us. It now remains that we consider the manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and shew some of its evidences, that we may know if we are the subjects of the divine operation.

I. The converts at Corinth were manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ—written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. When our Lord explained the nature and the manner of prayer to His disciples, He taught all who should hear or read His words, what they should pray for. “If ye, being evil, give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” The influence of the Holy Spirit is thus evidently one of the principal gifts we should ask of God in prayer, and it is the subject of

especial promise, that such a request shall not be made in vain.

The necessity of the Spirit's work upon the heart, was shadowed forth in the ceremonies of the law given to the Israelites. There were not only daily sacrifices appointed to typify that great and only atonement for sin which was afterwards to be made; but also divers washings, and anointings with holy oil, which were designed to shew both the necessity of inward purification, and of the regeneration of the heart by the Spirit of the living God. In the laws prescribed for the purification of the leper, this fact was very significantly represented. Consecrated oil was put upon his ear, his hand and his foot. What was the meaning of this ceremony? The disease of leprosy was typical of the disease of the soul. The person afflicted with it was cut off from the congregation and the tabernacle. Thus sin defiles the soul and excludes it from heaven. The anointing of the ear—the hand—and the foot, was prefigurative of the unction from the Holy One by which we *hear*, and receive His word in our hearts; by which we *take in hand* the things that please God; and then we *walk* in His holy ways. The Holy Spirit first regenerates the spiritually dead, then leads the quickened soul to Christ, and then carries on the work of grace till it is perfected in glory. To refer to the imagery of the text, He transfers as it were, the law of the ten commandments from the tables of stone on which they were originally written by the finger of God, and writes them on the fleshly tables of the heart. He first softens it to receive the impression, and then inscribes the law upon it in characters which shall never be erased, and hence all on whom the record is imprinted are manifestly declared to be the epistles of Christ written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God.

The process may be painful, but it is nevertheless necessary. In the order of the divine operation on the heart, God will have the soul sensible of the bitterness of

sin, before it shall taste the sweetness of mercy; the plough of conviction must go deep, and make long furrows in the heart, before the precious seed of comfort is sown there. It is the constant method of the Holy Spirit to show man his sin, then his Saviour; first his danger, then his deliverer; first his wound, then his cure: his own vileness, then the righteousness of Christ. The Israelites were first stung with serpents, and then the brazen serpent for their recovery was set up before their eyes. Thus it is with all who apply to the divine Physician.

II. What are the contents and evidences of this epistle? The one will explain the other. The lives of Christians are the best and only satisfactory letter of commendation by which the fact is attested. This arises from the recovery of that communion with God which was lost by the fall. The epistle of Christ is no longer a slave, He is a child of God. To live in filial relation to Him is at once the peace, the happiness and the glory of a Christian. Such an one sees the hand of his heavenly Father in everything. In all he has he enjoys the gifts of God. All counsel, all understanding, all learning, are of the Lord, from the ploughman in the field—"casting in the principal wheat, the barley, and the rye in their place" to the greatest and mightiest effort of the human faculties. Without the wisdom that cometh from above, the most learned productions of men stand a tottering monument of folly which the child of a few years, if instructed in Christian truth, might overthrow. It is not by the exercise of his brightest talents, by laborious investigation, or by deep and patient study, that the man becomes the epistle of Christ, who was once the epistle of Satan. It is by the engraving of the Holy Spirit, by the word of faith, by the teaching of revelation, that man becomes the epistle of Christ.

And not only does He, the Spirit of the living God, implant the principle of spiritual life in the soul, but He preserves, strengthens, and expands it, whence the believer,

“beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

And thus He manifestly declares it. Christ may be said to publish to the world a great number of epistles, to make known the perfection and completeness of His salvation, that men might believe in Him. Every sinner converted from the error of his ways, is a published epistle to all who will read and understand; when we see those who were accustomed to do evil, learning to do well; when we see the skin of the Ethiopian and the spots of the leopard changed—we see a publication issued by the Spirit of the living God, “known and read of all men.”

My brethren in what relation do we stand to this subject? Are we—or are we not—the epistles of Christ? Have you any evidence of the fact? By nature we are epistles of sin, of error, of depravity, of guilt. If we have been renewed in the spirit of our minds, we must give all the glory to Him, to whom alone it is due. A true Christian is the workmanship of God. If we are brought to know Him whom to know is life eternal, it is because the Spirit of the living God has written His name and shed His grace upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. And that sacred inscription shall never be defaced, but be read on the day of judgment to our eternal joy.

W. CLINTON.

ON THE RECEPTION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts xix. 2.—“*Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?*”

ONE of the special promises which our blessed Lord made to His sorrowing brethren with a view to their comfort after His departure from them, was the assurance that He would send the Holy Spirit who should supply His absence and cause them to dry their tears. Accordingly on the day of Pentecost—a word which signifieth the *fiftieth*, because it was the fiftieth day after the Passover when it occurred—the promise was fulfilled, and the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost. But the feast of weeks, commonly known as the feast of harvest, was now being kept, and hence a vast multitude of Jews from all parts of Judea and the surrounding districts were assembled at its celebration. Hearing of the remarkable gift which had been conferred on the apostles, who spake with new tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, they hastened to catch some of the sounds which were so miraculous and astonishing. When the extraordinary power of the apostles to speak different languages was “noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.” While some “were amazed and in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this: Others mocking said—These men are full of new wine.” This insinuation aroused Peter and his brethren, and standing up he repelled the insidious imputation, and then proceeded to detail in a discourse of much pathos and great power the several circumstances of the case which had so much perplexed them. His address carried conviction to

their minds—they were pricked to the heart, and cried out unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The apostles directed them to “repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,” adding in this case, “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” About three thousand souls received the exhortation, complied with the terms, and were on that same day, added to the Church. This was the beginning of the Christian dispensation, which St. Paul describes and designates the ministration of the Spirit, in contrast with the preceding system of Moses which he calls the ministration of death.

But the sacred influence did not stop with the events of that day. In all subsequent conversions from heathenism to Christianity—from darkness to light—and from unbelief to faith, the change has been effected by the Holy Spirit. And thus it ever will be, for no man can come unto the Father except he be taught of God, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

The case before us was this. St. Paul finding certain disciples at Ephesus, said unto them, “have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” These men were not converts to Christianity—they were believers in the baptism of John, the baptism of repentance, in the belief that the Messiah was near. They had therefore advanced but one step towards the kingdom of God. They did not know that Christ was come, or that the Holy Spirit had been poured down from on high. They were therefore novices in the matter of religion, and required instruction in the things concerning the faith of the gospel.

To make this subject practical, we will endeavour to shew, *first*, what the reception of the Holy Spirit imparts; or in other words, what it is to receive His influence in order to salvation.

In the early ages of Christianity, it included the miraculous as well as the converting and sanctifying influences

of this divine agent. Those essential influences which are connected with the kingdom of God within us, though less splendid to the eye of sense, are even more precious to the eye of faith, and produce fruits in the soul, without which the most exalted gifts would avail nothing, but leave us as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

The Spirit of God must be received as the Spirit of truth to teach us. "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall lead you into all truth;" a promise that belongs to the whole body of the Church no less than to the Apostles. Man by nature is in darkness and error. He is an alien from the life of God, and in many cases, the palpable captive of Satan. How is he to be rescued? He is to be admonished. His danger must be told him. And although he may hear and not believe, yet he cannot believe unless he hear. By the ministry of the word the Divine Spirit enters the mind, sheds light upon the understanding and the conscience, and the man who was as one born blind, now sees.

As a Spirit of adoption and of holiness, the Comforter comes. The slave is changed into a child, the proud is now become humble, the prodigal is made to feel his danger, and to think of his Father and his home. The mind that was once dead to all spiritual emotions now begins to stir with life, and to discern the need of pardon and purity. The thunders of the law of God which had been unheeded, are now startling and alarming, and in some such language as Saul at his conversion, the heart asks—what must I do to be saved? Peace at length succeeds. The agitation subsides. Christ is become the sinner's rest. He is passed from death to life.

Have you, brethren, received this heavenly influence? It is most important that you should be able to decide the question. "Know ye not," asks the apostle, "that the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobates?"—or under proof, as the word might be rendered." "As

many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Secondly. To enable you to answer the question in the text, I will state a few of the *evidences* or *effects* of the reception.

1. Prayer is one of these. The Spirit of God is a praying spirit. When Saul of Tarsus was smitten to the earth in his way to Damascus, he began to pray. He was a professor of the Jewish religion before, and had doubtless often joined in the services of the temple, but it does not seem as if he had prayed till now. There is this marked distinction between the form and the reality of prayer. A man may say a prayer, yet never pray. It is the cry of the hungry for food, of the sick for health, of the condemned for pardon, that amounts to prayer in the true meaning of the term. The Holy Spirit helps us under our infirmities thus to pray. We may not have a flow of words, or fine language at command, but these are not necessary. It is a mark of the Spirit, when we pray from the heart.

2. Another fruit of the Spirit, is the hatred of whatever is known to be sinful in the sight of God. One great design of the coming of Christ, was to destroy the works of the devil: and it is displayed in the personal restoration of man to the moral image and purity of his original state. As the Saviour died to destroy the curse without us, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to take away the curse from within us. There is an innate aversion and hatred in every renewed mind to whatever is unholy. It is not a slavish and servile conflict against evil that is now maintained—such as an hireling might carry on at the command of his master. He that is born of God abhors the sin that is the enemy of his soul and the cause of his sorrow. As long as any remains of the old man are found within, so long will the conflict continue. ...

3. There is another fruit and evidence of having received the Spirit distinctly mentioned in Scripture. It is

Christian love. "The fruit of the Spirit is love." "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Love is the element of heaven. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love;" and wherever the Spirit of love is found, we have the royal signature of the blessed Spirit. A sincere Christian cannot but love those who shew the holy, humble, and forgiving temper of Jesus. It was a common observation of the heathen with respect to the early disciples—"See how these Christians love one another." Their mutual affection was so new and so clear to the world, that it excited the admiration of all who witnessed it. Hatred, variance, strife, contention, and all evil passions had so long filled the world, that men gazed with wonder on the benignant influence of the gospel in calming the troubled spirit.

4. There is yet one other mark decisive and vital of having received the Spirit. *It is the faith that worketh by love.* No man whose eyes are opened to discern his danger and the utter insufficiency of his works to save his soul, but renounces at once and for ever all dependence on the righteousness of his outward life, let it be what it may. And this leads him at the same time, to place his entire dependence on the Saviour. Hence the prominent position that faith occupies in the scheme of salvation. He that believeth shall be saved. If we stand, it is by faith. If we are purified, it is by faith. If we are justified, it is by faith; and if we die in peace, it is by faith. These are some of the works of having received the Spirit—try yourselves whether they are found within you.

J. E. EVERITT.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

Matt. xiii. 31, 32.—“*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field ; which indeed is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*”

IN comparing human labours with divine operations, we shall be struck with the great difference between them. In the works of men, there is a great outlay of effort, of instrumentality, and means ; in those of God, there are none of these. The hand of the Creator is for the most part invisible, and can only be discovered by the most careful observation. The results of the secret influence alone strike the spectator. Man builds an habitation for his abode : how many hands are occupied in raising the structure ! The axe-man has to fell the timber—the miner has to penetrate the caverns of the earth for the iron—the quarrier has to blast and fashion the granite or the marble—the four quarters of the globe contribute resources collected by the agency of wind, and tide, and steam, and the toil of man and beast. Then comes the strain of sinews and of complicated machines to elevate the massive blocks to their appropriate position, and arrange them in their order. Artizans and artists are now called to supply the infinite details of convenience and decoration ; and at last, after months, it may be years, of toil, labour, and expence, the work is completed. The din ceases, the scaffoldings are removed, the mechanical apparatus is taken down, the rubbish is cleared away, and the building stands out to view, elegant or unsightly, magnificent or humble, according to the skill, the taste, and the means of the proprietor.

Such is the work of man in his constructive efforts. What a contrast with the mode of God's operations ! He spoke, and the earth stood forth. He ordained the moon and the stars, and they entered upon their career. There is no parade of means—no turmoil—no confusion. The quiet, unobtrusive power of God achieved all in silence, and with infinite ease. So His universe fulfils all its functions. The heavenly bodies revolve and shine without noise or friction, with less appearance of effort than attends the simplest act of man. We close our eyes at night to sleep ; in the morning we awake, when the earth, through many degrees of longitude and latitude, over whole realms and empires, bears the same aspect as it did when the sun shone upon it the day before. The fields, the house, the street, all are the same, though by a process noiseless, unobserved and unfelt, the globe is some millions of miles distant from the spot in creation which it occupied twelve hours before.

In the work of the husbandman we have another amplification of this thought. The farmer clears the soil of its encumbrances, gathers out the stones thereof, and with much labour, cultivates it for the reception of the seed. He ploughs, and manures, and sows, and tills, and watches, and waits. How different the divine process ! How quiet, and silent, and unobserved ! By and by comes the former rain ; the sun shines in his silent career ; and the tender shoot begins to show itself. By degrees imperceptible, and by agencies and laws unseen, the ripened harvest at length rewards the farmer's toil. The increase is of God, but the labour, the anxiety, the expence, are of the human agent.

As it is in the natural, so is it in the moral world. His operations are secret, silent, but almighty. His gracious designs germinate and ripen in the sunshine of His mercy. His empire over the soul owes nothing to violence—His authority nothing to pomp and parade. His kingdom cometh not with observation. "It is like to a grain of

mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which, indeed, is the least of all seeds ; but when it is grown, it is the greatest of herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

One word of explanation might here be made. Eastern travellers tell us, that although the mustard seed is not simply and itself the smallest of seeds, yet that it is the smallest of such as grow unto a tree of woody substance. And as to its full grown dimensions, so as to afford shelter for birds, we must not limit the luxuriancy of Indian plants to the diminutive stature of our colder climate. It is not proper to judge of eastern vegetables by those which are familiar to ourselves.

I. We shall, therefore, consider the parable as announcing a fundamental law of Christ's kingdom, by which it has achieved all its success. Our Saviour, we may presume, had special reference to the humble beginnings and the future triumphs of the Gospel in the world. Nothing could be less promising of great results, than was the course of Jesus up to the time of this announcement. Whether we consider the humble condition of our Lord Himself, or the character of those He gathered round Him in the sublime enterprise upon which He had condescended to visit our world, nothing could appear less probable, than the triumph of His doctrine. He indeed wielded great power in working miracles, and miracles were useful as means to awaken attention and confirm His mission, but they were not fit agents for propagating the truths which He came to teach. These consisted "in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and these moral elements could only be diffused by means of persuasion, bringing them into contact with human minds, till convinced of their importance, they shall be willing to render it a cheerful obedience. One poor man in appearance, a carpenter and a carpenter's son, with a dozen illiterate

followers, stood upon the shore of the sea of Galilee, and uttered new doctrines in parables. But in these doctrines were deposited the germ of a spiritual kingdom, destined to embrace the wide world. A few simple hearted men with partial light had given in their adhesion to this unpatronized teacher. That was all: at least, that was all that appeared to the world; and no great enterprize, it will be admitted, had a less propitious introduction. We have little evidence of any great success attending the personal ministry of Christ. We hear of a few women who had accompanied Him from Galilee to Jerusalem; but for the most part, the multitudes who attended upon His ministry, and witnessed His miracles, but partially comprehended His doctrines, and beyond the temporary excitement and some expressions of spontaneous admiration, we hear of no wonderful results. Of the five hundred brethren who met the Saviour in Galilee after His resurrection, it is uncertain whether they were either converted or convinced, as we hear nothing of them afterwards. Be this as it may, the ministry of our Lord converted John, and James, and Peter, and their associates; and it thus planted the grain of mustard seed, which has grown into a great tree, in whose branches and under whose shade so many millions have found shelter and refreshment.

The progress of the Gospel, no less than its origin, has ever been true to the simple instructive analogy of our text. Its real history has never been written, and never can be. Its annals are made up of endless accounts of controversies, heresies, and apostacies. The accession of princes to the outward fold, wars called religious, the biography of bishops and dignitaries,—these, and similar events, constitute what is called Church-history. It is, perhaps, all we had a right to expect—all that could be written on earth; but we may be sure, that the final day will disclose a record of a widely different character. The noiseless toil of the missionary in his proper field; the unostentatious labour of

the pastor among his simple flock ; the patient efforts of the christian parent to do good in the family and the social circle—the good fight of faith—the fervent charity—the earnest prayer—the holy life, these are the great facts upon which the approving eye of God is fixed, and which really constitute the growth of Christianity. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” His genial showers soften the furrowed field, and nourish the hidden roots of the tree of life. The least of all seeds at the beginning, it has become a great tree, but its growth has been gradual, and imperceptibly slow. The kingdom which it so beautifully shadows forth has no greater extent and influence than it hath achieved over willing and loving souls.

II. But the kingdom of heaven which is within us, finds a most correct and instructive illustration in the parable.

In the first place, how faint are the earliest traces of conviction or sentiment on religious impressions, in which the spiritual life had its origin ! Who can say when the first seed was implanted in the soul, or by what hand ? Its development, by means of some providence, some parental instruction, by some sermon, or the reading of some good book, or the monitions of conscience, may be remembered to the end of life, but the grains from which it sprang, who can tell when or how it was deposited in the soul ? The blessed God might connect us by His irresistible power. But He acts otherwise. The dawn and the twilight succeed the darkness, and usher in the day. First the shoot—then the blade, then the full ear. Men wait for such impulses as shall by a sort of physical violence, break the bonds of sin, and drive them to Christ. This is a great delusion. Such is not the genius of the Gospel. Whoever *feels* his need of mercy, has light enough. It is time that he should arise and go to his father.

Piety may be genuine while it is felt to be imperfect. We are born into the kingdom, babes and not men of full

stature. The seed does not spring up at once a great tree, but becomes so by growth—by showers, by sunshine, and by the rough winds that howl among its branches and strain it to the root. We must be content with God's method, and cultivate the precious germ of the future tree. That germ contains in embryo a stately trunk, and goodly branches, and luxuriant foliage, and delicious fruit.

But let us not mistake. The gospel in the heart becomes an element of progress. It disowns and stigmatizes as backsliders or hypocrites, those who retrograde or even stand still. Indeed none are stationary, any more in religion than in years. The seed that does not spring up soon loses its power of germinating, and perishes in the earth. The fig-tree which bears no fruit is doomed to be cut down as an encumbrance to the ground. Alas! many live in a kind of dreamy expectation of something better, but listless and inactive. Do they grow? If not, what resemblance have they to the principle laid down in the text? When with such professors, is the fight with principalities—the warfare against flesh and blood—the crucifixion of self, with its affections and lusts?

The subject thus briefly considered contains abundant matter for reflection. It teaches us to be indulgent in our judgments of the piety of others, while it puts us upon the careful culture of our own.

J. HUTTON, D.D.

PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN THE WORK OF GOD.

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2 Cor. v. 5.—“ *Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*”

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THE self-same thing to which the apostle here alludes, is the final happiness of believers, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. It has been proverbially said, that “heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.” It will not be indiscriminately occupied. “None will obtain admittance there, but followers of the Lamb.” We are not Christians by the first, but by the second birth: and He that makes us meet for the inheritance is no human agent. The word of God, the ordinances of religious worship, education, holy example, parental piety may be the means of grace by which we are brought to the salvation in Christ, but the power is of God. The voice of reason and conscience, the sufferings and trials of life, extraordinary events of Providence may be employed to lead us to prayer, faith, and eternal life; but all these can effect nothing essentially, without the special influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the truth set before us in the text.

Let us consider, therefore, the operations of the Holy Spirit, in the work by which men are prepared for the self-same thing—the blessedness of heaven. The subject is practical. It forms the second part of the way of salvation. The ground and cause of eternal life, is the atoning death of the Son of God, and we are partakers of His merits, by faith in Him. But there must be a meetness—a personal qualification for this attainment, and this too is of grace, for it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of His

good pleasure. This is something *wrought*—a work of a Divine Agent, of which man is the subject, and by whom he becomes a new creature.

There are five steps in orderly succession whereby we are wrought, prepared, made fit for the kingdom of God.

The *first* of these is the *Divine call* by which we are excited and urged and invited to seek salvation. This is general, and is addressed in various ways to all men wherever the gospel is preached. It is conveyed by the warnings of God in our own hearts, by the world around us which tells us that salvation is not to be found in aught it has to give, and that this is not our home. But the direct instrument is the gospel, which contains earnest invitations from the God of mercy to every son and daughter of Adam, to lay hold on eternal life. “Repent and believe the gospel—the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” With this proclamation our Lord began His ministry, and with more or less of distinctness, He made it prominent in all His discourses. Thus He said—“I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” “Come unto me” was His language to every weary soul: “I will give you rest,” was His promise. “Come, for all things are now ready,” were His words of invitation to the outcast and the starving. His apostles followed in the same steps. Hence St. Paul says—“We are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead be ye reconciled to God.” Thus also the same apostle exclaims, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” Similar language is employed in the Old Testament. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Turn ye to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope. Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions. Why will ye die? Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Prepare to meet thy God.” These and sundry other passages of the same import, call upon man wherever he is found, to forsake

the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding. Alas, that so many should turn a deaf ear, to invitations so generous and free. Yet there are some who embrace these gifts of heaven, and receive the word with joy.

The *second* step in the preparation of the soul for heaven, is *Divine Illumination*. Darkened as the understanding is through man's alienation from God, it may yet become light in the Lord. The Scriptures are the great source of illumination to mankind, through the Spirit. Our blessed Lord says—"He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Without Christ we are dark, not knowing ourselves or the way of salvation. But if we hear the heavenly call, the Holy Spirit enlightens us by the word of truth, and communicates a conviction of our sinfulness and need of mercy. This is what is meant by the apostle when he says—"God hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." When this spiritual light is shed upon the mind, we see all things in a different manner than before. We perceive our ignorance, we discern our condemnation, our need of a Saviour, and the dismal night of unregeneracy and forgetfulness of God is passed away. The rays of truth beaming on the soul, "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus the soul that was sometime darkness, is now light in the Lord.

But there is another, a *third* step in succession. The spiritual illumination of the inner man is followed by *repentance*. A person may understand the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, just the same as he may the theory of any system of science which comes before him. A man may be enlightened on the subject of the doctrines and principles of Christianity, while his heart is a stranger to all holy feeling and true conversion. There is always a reno-

vation—moral transformation accompanying the entrance of God's word into the soul. The mere knowledge of the gospel is of itself insufficient. The mind must be softened, subdued, and made tender. This is what the Scripture calls—a “taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh.” And this repentance, contrition, godly sorrow, is painful and intense, in proportion as the law with its pure and holy light, illumines the whole man, and penetrates more deeply into the recesses of the heart. There it discovers, perhaps, under the fair veil of a life, moral and honourable before the world, such a want of heartfelt love and devotedness to God, such coldness and ingratitude, so much selfishness and absence of self-denial, so much rashness, and so little gentleness and forbearance to others, so much rebellion towards God, and so little desire to please Him, so much talking of religion and so little prayer, so many good resolutions, and so unfrequent a fulfilment of them—in a word, so many sinful desires and inclinations, that the man dares not raise his eyes to heaven, but in the language of the publican exclaims—“God be merciful to me a sinner.”

This is one of the methods by which the sinner is prepared for heaven. But we must not ascribe to repentance a virtue or a merit which does not belong to it. We are to remember, that it is not a ground of acceptance with God. The mere sense of unworthiness cannot make us worthy. This godly sorrow does not make a man deserving of mercy, but only sensible of his need of it; it imparts no worthiness, but it forms a state of mind fitted to receive the gospel; just as hunger does not make a man deserving of food, but gives him a relish for it when it is set before him. Want and emptiness constitute a suitableness for the provisions of the gospel, but they give no legal right to receive them. Repentance is most salutary and necessary, but it cannot merit the kingdom of God. Salvation is not to be earned, it must be freely bestowed.

And this conducts us to the *fourth step* in the process of religion, namely, *faith in Christ*. The sinner called, enlightened, repentant, asks—what must I do to be saved? To this the gospel replies—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” This is the gospel. It promises to those who repent forgiveness of sin for Christ’s sake; His righteousness is reckoned to their account; and in virtue of His merits, all who believe are justified freely from all charges of law, and the sentence of condemnation is abolished. This great act of Divine mercy is termed *justification*. By it our guilt is taken away, our transgression covered, our sin cancelled, and we are restored to our original relation to God. We are now heirs of the highest and eternal good; and by the mercy and love of God in Christ, we are made more than conquerors of all the ills and calamities of life, and will be eventually happy in the enjoyment of imperishable blessings.

Some persons repudiate *faith* as the ground of salvation, but let me ask, in what way can a man appropriate to himself any promise save by faith in it? However true, it is of no use to me as long as I do not believe it. And this is even more palpable, if the promise has reference to a good which is not an object of sense. I cannot assure myself of its truth, either by my hands or my eyes, only by faith. All the bands of human society are joined together by faith. In all commercial transactions, *credit*, which is but another expression for faith, is the lever that moves on the link that binds man with man. The same in politics. What is usually termed public opinion, and is considered to be a mighty power, is nothing else than the faith of man in certain principles, ideas, or doctrines, for without a conviction of the truth of such principles, opinion would effect nothing. And still more in those relations which have love and esteem for their basis, is this evident. Christ is the unspeakable gift of God: faith lays hold of and receives this gift. We are not saved for the sake of faith, or as a

recompence for believing, but because faith appropriates and lays hold on the Saviour. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The *last* and *final* step in the method of salvation, is the *sanctification of the soul*. That faith which apprehends the love of God in Christ, produces a desire to walk with God in all holy obedience. The spirit of bondage and fear is expelled from our bosoms, and the Spirit of adoption cries out Abba Father. Henceforth man gladly submits his own will to the Divine; and endures trials for the sake of Him who appoints them. True faith consecrates every other love—conjugal, filial, parental, national, on the altar of religion. It sanctifies every condition, from the cottage to the palace, and prompts every one, from the humblest peasant to the most exalted monarch to the discharge of his duties in the calling to which God has appointed him.

This is the earnest of the Spirit—the beginning of the bliss of heaven. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who gives us a portion and a foretaste of what we are hereafter to enjoy. Heaven is not therefore altogether a distant and an unknown good; the believer has a degree of its blessedness even in this vale of tears.

J. A. SARTORIOUS.

THE SACRIFICE GOD REQUIRES.

Psalm li. 16, 17.—“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

THE origin of sacrifice was of Divine Institution and appointment. It was offered by Abel and accepted by God: and we have strong presumptive reason to infer, that its revelation in the early age of the world immediately after the fall, was intended to illustrate the first promise, that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” The notion of approaching the Creator by the sacrifice of animal victims may be justly thought to afford proof of a divine origin, since it is hardly credible that man of himself, would have devised a plan of reconciliation with an offended Deity by the oblation of vicarious or substitutional sacrifices.

The text shews us that the penitent monarch, had enlightened views on this subject—perhaps beyond what might have been expected. A mind uninstructed on this matter, under the lashings of a guilty conscience, would in his circumstances have said, “I have grievously sinned, and I must offer the appointed victim—the bullock or the goat, as the atonement of my sin: and as I have the means, I will shew the sincerity of my repentance, by laying the most expensive sacrifices on the altar of my God.” But his mind was too clearly instructed in the nature of sin, and the way of salvation, to allow him to repose on any ceremonial ordinances or moral duties. He therefore, knowing that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, declined to offer them, and with the avowal

of their inefficacy asserts the acceptableness of a broken and contrite spirit, as that which a sin-hating God required.

I. Let us notice the Psalmist's repudiation of all dependence upon ceremonial offerings for the remission of sin.

"Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it : Thou delightest not in burnt offerings." It cannot be supposed that he meant by this to denounce or cast a slight on the levitical sacrifice as the ordinance of God. Long after the utterance of these words, he offered sacrifices with great solemnity. When far advanced in years, he bought the threshing floor and oxen of Arunah the Jebusite, and built an altar unto the Lord, on which he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings as an atonement for the sin he had committed in numbering the people. And we cannot doubt that he constantly attended the public service of God in which sacrifices were daily offered.

What then does he mean by the sentiment before us ? *Three* answers might be given to this question.

1. The sins he had committed were not included in the number of those for which the sacrifice of victims was appointed. By the judicial law, no typical offerings were allowed for the remission of the penalties incurred by gross and heinous sins. Idolatry, murder, adultery, and some other kinds of iniquity were not in the catalogue of expiable offences. The sins which David had committed, and with respect to which he composed this Psalm, exposed him to the penalty of death, without the benefit of sacrifice. That God who is rich in mercy exempted him from the infliction, that was declared by the prophet Nathan. It was an exceptional case, specially decreed by the sovereign will of God. But while the sin was pardoned, yet the supreme Lawgiver bore testimony to his hatred and abhorrence of David's crimes, by the disasters in his family and kingdom, and the continued sorrow of his heart in reference to his guilt.

2. Another answer is—that there was no necessary connexion between ritual sacrifices and the remission of the sin. There is no actual and positive relation between the sacrifice of a beast, and the reparation of the broken law. The slaughter of a thousand innocent animals could not be an adequate expression of the Divine hatred of sin, nor an equivalent for the transgression of the revealed will of the Governor of the world. The regard which the blessed God paid to his own institutions arose entirely from the reference they bore to Him who was the Lamb slain in the purpose of God from the foundation of the world. For offences between man and man, for the infraction of the civil law, and the violation of the national code, and all minor misdemeanours, there were certain sacrifices appointed to be offered by the offender, but where iniquities were committed directly in breach of the moral law, no oblation was allowed or would be accepted, save in reference to Christ who was to make an end of such sin-offerings by the sacrifice of Himself.

3. When David says—Sacrifice and burnt-offering God does not desire, He is also to be understood as intimating, that even if these were appointed they would not be accepted apart from the state and frame of the mind. The inward disposition of the soul gives the value to every service we perform. When our blessed Lord commenced His ministry, and announced on the side of the hill to the multitude the fundamental principles of Christianity. His first benediction was poured on the poor in spirit, and the first promise made to such—“for their’s is the kingdom of heaven.” Self must be laid low that Christ may be exalted. The spirit of self-righteousness has widely prevailed in every age. It perverted the solemn rites of sacrifice among the Jews, and does the same among the professors of Christ’s religion. It ascribes to baptism and the supper of the Lord that efficacy in themselves which belongs only to that inward grace which these institutions represent.

The carnal Jew looked to the mere performance of his ceremonial ritual, as entitling him to the favour of God, and the carnal Christian does the same. The former went about to establish his own righteousness by carnal ordinances, and the individual who relies on his attendance upon sacraments for his salvation does in effect the same. Both rest in the outward sign, and virtually 'reject the thing signified; and from this perverseness of the human heart arise the superstition of the heathen, and the formality of nominal Christians.

II. What are the sacrifices which God will accept? "A broken spirit—a broken and contrite heart." But what are these?

The Scriptures describe the natural heart of man under the metaphor of a stone—hard, insensible—unyielding, unimpressible by common means. This humiliating emblem indicates the pride, the obstinacy, and the rebellion of our common nature; and is thus a true representation of the mind and affections while unrenewed. Man will walk in the way of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes. There is not a single truth of the gospel but men disregard in the enmity of the carnal mind. If it be declared in the words of our Lord,—“except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,” the declaration is made light of, and men proudly presume they shall go to heaven, although they are conscious of having never experienced such a change. If it be said—“There is none righteous, no not one, all have sinned and are guilty before God, they affirm they are good kind of people, and innocent in His sight. If it be told them, that there is none other name under heaven but that of Christ whereby men must be saved, they seek not the salvation which He is ready to bestow, nor will they submit to the righteousness of God. The cause of all this is the pride, enmity, and opposition of the will of man to the will of God. But when the word of God comes with power, it breaks down and subdues this

proud spirit. The heart is then softened and melted, and like Saul of Tarsus, the trembling and astonished sinner asks—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Now he no longer makes light of Christ; no longer trusts in his own merits, nor relies on his own righteousness, because he feels himself undone. His former presumptuous wishes and desires, his thoughtless unconcern, his prayerlessness, his love of sin, his vain hopes and self-righteous pride are passed away, and in these, and in many other respects, all things are become new.

This is the broken spirit, the broken and contrite heart, of which our text speaks. It was exemplified in the case of David. He felt his sin, he confessed his guilt, he is conscious of his need of mercy, and he cries unto God for pardon and purity. Nothing will satisfy him but a new heart and right spirit: the joy of God's salvation, and the shewing forth of His praise.

These are *the sacrifices of God*—such as He requires, and which He will accept. The essential nature of a sacrifice, consisted in slaying the victim and offering it to God. These essentials are found in a broken and contrite heart, and thus dead to sin becomes an oblation to God. It is offered up to Him, not indeed as an atonement for sin, as was the case with the sacrifice of the Redeemer, but as a dedicated thing, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is its reasonable service. This is the very design of the gospel—of the ministry of the word, of the ordinances of religion, and of public worship. It is a sacrifice of His own production, it gives to Him the glory of His own work, and it is in unison with the redemption we have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such sacrifices *He will not despise*. His declarations—the office and promises of Christ, and the consideration that it is His work to create in us new and contrite hearts, all go to prove that He will accept such sacrifices. If we require proof—they are at hand. Did He despise David when

he was thus broken-hearted? Or Ephraim when he turned and repented? Or the publican when he cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Or the prodigal when he threw himself upon the divine mercy? Or the female penitent in the house of Simon when she stood behind the Saviour weeping and bathed His feet with her tears? Why then should He despise the broken spirit now? The world may despise you, if such be your character: but blessed of the Lord are you. While He overlooks millions of proud obstinate offenders, He will give you beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

S. WILLS.

THE GUILT OF PREACHING ANOTHER GOSPEL.

Gal i. 8.—"*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*"

WHEN our blessed Lord gave His last charge to His disciples, He said with deep and solemn emphasis—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Such language from the lips of such a prophet, involves a sentiment of the gravest importance. If salvation follows from believing, and perdition from not believing, then it is a question of infinite moment to ascertain what that faith is, and whether we really possess it; since that must be a matter of unequalled magnitude on which such vast and eternal consequences depend.

The same observation no less applies to the language of my text. That can be no secondary affair—no common thing, which led an inspired apostle to denounce destruction, even on an angel from heaven, who shall offend therein. And to reiterate the denunciation, invests it with an awfulness not to be surpassed. If the accredited ambassador of Christ, however zealous, learned, gifted, and eloquent—if a holy seraph from the throne of God, should preach any other gospel than that of redemption by Christ—justification by faith—regeneration by the Spirit of God—topics of the apostle's ministry—were both the one and the other to be devoted to destruction, then doth it become us with fear and trembling to ascertain what the gospel is, and whether we have received it. If the curse of heaven will sooner or later fall on the preacher who proclaims another gospel, then the same fearful doom awaits those who receive another. How soberly, impartially, prayerfully, ought we to enter on the consideration of such a subject! Your state in eternity may hang upon the inquiry of this very hour! The gospel is a warm friend, if heartily embraced: a stern adversary if slighted or perverted.

First. What then is the gospel on which such momentous consequences depend? To this question, various are the answers given, according to man's wishes and inclinations. Some reply that the gospel is *the law of Moses amended*. They tell us, that its ceremonies and local observances have been done away, in order that it might be the religion not of the Jews alone, but of all mankind. They say, that it is a purer morality than that of the Israelitish lawgiver, entering into the very secrets of the heart, and requiring the highest exercise of virtue.

Is this the gospel? Can this be good news—that when we could not keep even the outward act clear of sin, we are now to be pure in the thought? No, this is no gospel—no tidings of great joy to those that are lost already. It is but a binding faster the prisoner in the stocks, or a sinking him

deeper in the dungeon. It is loading him with two chains for one, and setting double guards at the iron gate against his escape.

But what is the Gospel? Some answer — *the sacraments*. They teach—that every one is justified at baptism—made pure as an Angel, and accepted of God; and that not even the greatest saints are ever regenerate without baptism. They add, that the first wilful offence after baptism, can only be cleansed—not with the blood of Christ—but with much penance and many tears; while it is doubtful if a second or a third sin after baptism can ever be forgiven! This the Gospel? This good news? Alas! who has not sinned wilfully fifty times after baptism? Who then can be saved?

But we ask again—What is the Gospel? *The law moderated* and reduced to a level with man's ability to keep it, say some. They tell us that God by the voice of His Son has amended the law; and that instead of requiring *perfect* obedience, which no one could render, He is now content with *imperfect* obedience. Since the death of Christ we are faithfully to render to God what we are able to pay. But how much imperfection—that is sin—will He allow? May we disobey five times for obeying once? Or will one or two instances of obedience in a life be enough? This the Gospel? Away with such a scheme! It is not “the glorious gospel of the blessed God.” It does not inform us when we are safe. It does not say how much imperfection God will permit: nor how much disobedience He will pass by. This is no rule—no guide. Can it therefore be “glad tidings?” Can this be the Gospel of God, which represents Him at one time as asking too much, and at another as accepting less? Is it the God of wisdom and purity that such persons are talking of, or some earthly knave outwitted at a bargain? No, this is “another gospel—which is not another.” It makes Christ the minister of sin. It in effect says, that His sufferings for iniquity have ratified a charter that men

may commit it with impunity. Thus, from the very balm of God's best gift to the world, a baneful poison is prepared!

No, this is not the gospel which St. Paul preached. The gospel is glorious; but where is the glory of this? Can it ever be glorious in God to undo His deed? Can that be glory to God which would be shame to man? Is it not a mark of weakness, of fraud, or of wickedness, for an individual to revoke his solemn enactments? The doctrine of Christ and of His apostles, upholds the law in all its unsoiled and snowy purity. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea, we establish the law." One jot or tittle of the law shall never fail. It is the mirror of God's own purity—"holy, just, and good." It is indeed the occasion of death to every wilful rebel; but that is the fault, not of the commandment, but of the race to whom it is given.

Secondly. These, then, are some of the *perversions* of the gospel, which will serve to shew the ground of St. Paul's vehement denunciation in our text. To his enlightened and inspired mind, these, and other corruptions of the truth, carried with them all that was cruel and deadly to man, and rebellious to God. He therefore proscribes—denounces—condemns them. He sees the brand of Heaven's burning indignation stamped on their traitor-brows: and though an angel of the skies should enlist his eloquence on their side, he saith boldly—"let him be accursed."

But if these teachings be not the gospel, the question again returns—What is the Gospel? We answer—it is seen in its full glory, in the life, and above all, in the death of Christ. All before this was but the dim dawn. The law was not good news. It found man a rebel, and it left him so. It found the world under malediction, and its expiring words re-echo the same—"lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." It gave light to conscience, and sent a stormy cry through all her gloomy caverns; but the sleepers awoke not. It discovered man's position in the

world—showed him to himself as a wanderer over steep and slippery mountains; and himself sleepy and dizzy—a drunken staggerer to the gates of death. It forced upon his notice the gulf below, but it lifted no hand to steady him, or to pluck him back from the abyss.

But the gospel unfolds another scene. It begins with Christ's entrance into the world, whose life and death, and the principles which these involved, are the threads which make up in warp and woof the seamless, perfect robe of the righteousness of God. There we see the justice of the Most High, vigorously exact, checked by no fear, diverted by no favour, demanding, and taking no less than His real due. Yet there, side by side, sits mercy enthroned, in all its meekness and all its majesty. On Calvary these two seemingly inconsistent attributes are blended. There, as man fell, so man suffered. There, as the law enacted death, so death was endured. There, as the justice of God will not veil its holy head to any thing save perfection, it exacted its full demand. And there the demand was paid. An infinite atonement was made, embracing every finite act of sin. He who made it was God and man. As man to die—as God to make that death wondrous and effectual. As man to suffer—as God by that suffering to outweigh the demands of the law.

This is the Gospel—mercy's fullest proclamation. Man, ruined by the fall, stung by the dragon, that old serpent the devil, recovers here. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so hath the Son of man been lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

We hence see, in conclusion, the reason of the emphatic language of the text. St. Paul denounces all other schemes and devices for man's salvation, by whatever mind conceived, or by whatever lips proclaimed, as another gospel, fatal alike to the preacher, and to the hearer. That which he made the prominent element in his ministry, was Christ

and Him crucified—Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God. And this grand theme embraces every attribute of the Deity. Justice is here. It received its most perfect illustration in the death of the man Christ Jesus. The cup must be drank—not a drop must pass away. Then let none presume for his hundred measures to write fourscore. Not the slightest tittle shall be remitted to those who seek life by the deeds of the law. It is only in the Saviour—in His perfect obedience and sacrifice, that there is safety to man.

And in this gospel, there is mercy displayed. Are you writing bitter things against yourselves? Look here. The ransom has been paid. Sit not down to eke out in penances and tears some poor atonement for your offences. Go thy way, trembling, hoping, fearing, penitent: “thy sins are forgiven thee”—thy debt of five hundred pence to the law of God is cancelled. “Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” Stay by this truth. You are secure and may be happy here; and sing with the poet,

“Should all the forms that men devise,
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I’d call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.”

JAS. GOVETT.

MANLY PIETY ENFORCED.

1 Cor. xiv. 20.—“*Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*”

THE Church at Corinth was eminently distinguished for the possession of two remarkable gifts—the power of speaking in an unknown tongue, and of prophesying or preaching. Of these, the former was much the more splendid, and as man is naturally ambitious of distinction, it was the most admired and coveted of the two. Its impression on unbelievers was startling, and therefore it excited more attention than the plain and simple preaching of the gospel commonly obtained. For this reason it was more sought after by the Corinthians, and there was danger lest its prevalence in the course of time might supersede the ministry of the word.

To prevent such an issue, the apostle directs the attention of the Corinthians to the subject, in this and the two preceding chapters. He did not despise, or undervalue the power of speaking foreign languages. It was with him a matter of thanksgiving to God, that he could speak with tongues more than they all, yet in the Christian assembly where the number of those who were able to understand foreign speech were comparatively few, he would not utter words for the sake of mere display, but such as were intelligible to his hearers for their edification in the truth of the gospel.

I. Then follows the exhortation — “Brethren, be not children in understanding.” This is the first part of the apostolic counsel. If we bear in mind the fact, that many were attracted by the splendour and dazzle of enunciating words of a foreign tongue, while they threw the preaching

of the gospel into the shade, and made it a secondary matter, we shall perceive the force of this admonition. To be led away by the use of words not understood, is to be childish, and to shew the want of a sound mind. To admire the showy and the novel, rather than the solid and useful, is the act of a child. The little folks in the street or in the house, are pleased with any thing that amuses them ; and delighted with every object that affords them pastime and play. The inference is greatly significant. It conveys a rebuke to the Corinthians, and to all who like them, value the showy above the solid, and the fascinating above the useful. To intimate that their superlative admiration of the gift of tongues was as puerile as were the sports of a child with his toys, was a strong rebuke, and a master-stroke of oratory.

The admonition, however, is of general application, and not to be limited to the infancy of the Christian faith. It tells us, in effect, that many things both in the Church and in the world, which engross an undue measure of attention, are unworthy the first and chief regard of full grown men. We plead for no austerities ; we condemn not the admiration of the ornate, the beautiful, the symphonious in the worship of God, but to place the form above the substance, the words above the doctrine, the ritual above the spiritual, the attitude of the body above the homage of the heart to God, is unworthy the rational understanding of a being destined for immortality. The glare of superstition, its pomp and its ceremonial, may beguile the senses, and please the fancy, as the gilded toy does a child, while the sterling and the necessary are overlooked or placed in a very subordinate position. Many—very many of the objects that now absorb the mind, when we come to die, will appear to our view as insignificant as the play things of little children ; and we shall feel, that we have wasted our time and exhausted our energies on matters as undignified as the sports

of the childish play ground, or the little artifices to amuse the inmates of the nursery chamber.

II. But while in understanding we are not to be children, the apostle tells us in what respect we are to resemble them. "Howbeit in malice be ye children." This is the *second* counsel which we have to notice. In the stature of our minds, we are not to be feeble, immature, childish; but in the disposition we are to take them for our model. In mental soundness we are to rise above them; in moral feelings we are to be as they are. The word means *infants*; little ones that may yet require a mother's arm to sustain their tiny steps lest they fall.

There are numerous references in the sacred Scriptures to little children. Our blessed Lord pronounced them fit for the kingdom of heaven. He also set a little child in the midst of His disciples, and told them that it was a model of the Christian character, which all must become if they would be saved. The meaning of these teachings is, that we must be as humble, as free from guile and malice, from ill will and every wicked passion as little children are in their unsophisticated state.

Metaphors and comparisons employed by the inspired writers, are not to be indiscriminately applied. We are to use them in distinct and exclusive reference to the subject they are designed to illustrate. We apply this rule to the case before us. A child of two or three years of age may be fickle, peevish, wayward, even sullen; but it does not bear malice. It is teachable as far as its reason goes. It is ready of belief, credulous of what it is told, and confides in the promises made to it. The trifling resentments of childhood are soon blown away, and the offended are as friendly with their associates as before. Children are not implacable. They easily forgive, and are wont to forget. A malignant child is a monstrosity. For which reason St. Paul says, "In malice be ye children." Be as devoid of that wicked passion as they are. And in accordance

with this he says to the Ephesians—"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

III. But the point chiefly, though not exclusively intended, is the third and last clause in the text. "In understanding be men—full grown men, as the word signifies; act like persons whose judgment, or discernment is mature and sound.

To the due exercise of this faculty of our rational nature, we are often exhorted. St. Paul says, that manliness of understanding or of the mind, is one of the special blessings which the Christian dispensation confers on those who embrace its doctrines. He tells us, that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear—but of *power*, that is, *Christian fortitude*; and of love, that is, holy delight in God and His service; and of a *sound mind*, that is a wise, manly, firm, and vigorous understanding, such as may be justly expected in persons of ripe and cultivated intellects.

The first mark of this wise and understanding heart, is found in deep self-acquaintance. The sentiment of an ancient sage, has been echoed in the song of modern poets—

"Man know thyself, all wisdom centres there."

Yet a sentiment, so well expressed, is but ill understood by many who have often uttered it, and who have professed to make self-knowledge their study and their boast. Humility is always an essential and a prominent attribute of a man of cultivated understanding. He will also distinguish between the precious and the vile—the chaff and the wheat—the fundamental from the non-essential. He will admit divine truth in whatever form presented, and will give it the place to which it is entitled, even though it may speak

to chide, to admonish, to condemn him. He does not search after truth because it is pleasant, but because it is right. He thinks in order to act. He examines the Scriptures that he may believe rather than dispute; that he may learn his duty rather than cavil at the precept that enjoins it; and that he may be able to discern what is necessary to his salvation rather than what may gratify his senses and please his fancy.

If in understanding we are men, we shall cling to the Bible, lay hold on the simple and indisputable verities of God's word, and never be led away by the ravings of the fanatic, the deluded and deluding pretender to inspiration and to miracles, or by the silly ceremonies of an unscriptural and an idolatrous worship. A man of good understanding, such as the text enjoins, is open to conviction, if his judgment concurs in the doctrine propounded. He will be candid, yet firm; charitable yet unmoveable from the truths he has adopted from the full persuasion of their reality. He will be equally remote from an obstinate adherence to old opinions, and from a precipitate reception of new. He will never let go the old till he is satisfied from examination, experience, and prayer, that the new is better. He will carefully weigh the difference between vital and unimportant questions; and hold fast, as did Peter the hand that saved him from the deep, whatever stands revealed in the word of God as an article of faith or rule of duty. In this way wisdom is justified of her children.

In conclusion. Dull must be our minds, and childish our understandings, and perverse our nature, if we fail to derive instruction and to learn wisdom, from such a theme as our subject has brought before us. It teaches us that instead of being led away by the fascinating, we should embrace and hold fast the useful and the vital. It also shews us that religion has to do with the judgment, and is not to be treated as a matter of taste, of worldly interest, and of artificial preference. It states that the avowed followers of

Christ are expected to be men in understanding; and that no talents, no accomplishments, no attachments to what is externally pleasing to the eye or the sense, will avail ought in the absence of a personal and a practical attention to the positive and the pure. The Corinthians betrayed a feeling of pride in the gift of tongues, but St. Paul told them, that such an endowment would vanish, while faith, hope, and charity would abide for ever. May these be our's!

W. BURGESS, D.D.

JACOB AT BETHEL.

Genesis xxviii. 16, 17.—“*And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*”

IN the history of the Jews, and no less in that both of families and individuals, we have evidence of evil being overruled for good, by the wise and merciful Providence of God. The curse has often been turned into a blessing, and human infirmities made subservient to the accomplishment of divine purposes. But let no one infer from this feature of the divine conduct, that by so doing the blessed God gives the smallest sanction to man's iniquities, or in the slightest degree confounds evil with good. It is far otherwise. It may please Him in the plenitude of His mercy and wisdom to make our follies, and even our sins occasions for the manifestation more fully of His superabounding grace and forbearance; but it will be, as it always has been, in such a

manner as to make us feel that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against the Lord, and that His rod will not spare even His own people, if they willingly rebel against Him.

We have evidence of this in the case of Rebekah and Jacob. Their scheme succeeded: the coveted birthright was secured at the expence of truth and equity; Isaac was shamefully duped, and Esau was unrighteously supplanted. Dearly however, had both the mother and the son to pay for their unprincipled strategem. Jacob was compelled to fly from his home to escape the murderous vengeance of Esau whom he had defrauded, while Rebekah was deprived of the society of her favorite child, whose face she never saw again.

It was upon his journey towards Syria where the connexions of his mother resided, that the symbolical visions referred to in the text were vouchsafed to Jacob. It is not easy to conceive a condition more sad or gloomy than was his at this time. Without a mother's caress, without a father's table, or a paternal shelter to shield and defend him; a solitary wanderer in a country he had never travelled before; wearied with the journey of the day, and the gates of the city then called Luz, closed against him; the sun leaving the world in darkness, how dreary must have been his feelings! Under such circumstances, and doubtless not quite at ease with himself for the part he had acted towards his aged father and his only brother, we should not have expected a dream so sweet, so pleasant, and so heavenly. But to the righteous there ariseth light in the darkness, and the arm of Omnipotence was Jacob's shield.

The text expresses the feelings of his mind when he awoke. Perhaps it was a short sleep, but it was long enough; and the whole places before us *three* things which we will now consider.

First, we may notice Jacob's desolate situation. The eleventh verse says, that "he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he

took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." We may not attach to such a scene in a climate much warmer than our own, all the dreariness and the desolateness of a houseless wanderer among ourselves : but still there was sufficient in the circumstances of the case, to shew the sad effects and consequences of inconsistency, and a departure from the strict path of duty. Look at the fact. Here is an heir of promise, a chosen servant of God, from whom in future ages were to descend many powerful kings, whose history was to occupy so large a space in the book of God; a man in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, and of whom according to the flesh, Christ came; see this man a forlorn wanderer, banished from his home and his father's house, with the cold earth for his bed, a stone for his pillow, and the wide vault of heaven for his canopy and his curtains,—and learn, as you look upon the scene, how surely dishonesty of any kind meets with its reward; how sinful it is to attempt to accomplish even desirable objects by unlawful and unhallowed means; and how certainly the Judge of all will chasten and correct His people when they forsake Him.

Solemn is the warning which this scene reads to the professed followers of Christ! Whoever leaves the path of duty to please himself, will bring guilt and desolation upon his soul. By quitting the post which the Providence of God assigned him, he banishes himself from the service of God; and he must not be surprised if peace should flee from his bosom, and the supports of religion be withdrawn. God will not suffer sin upon His people; and without marking our sorrows as judgments, or as the penal inflictions of divine wrath, we may easily trace in our own conscience an ample explanation of their origin and their object. Jacob strove to hasten an event by unlawful means, which would have come to him in the regular course of divine providence. The result is, that he delays it. He aimed at the pre-

eminence in his father's house, and in a few hours he is resting his houseless head upon a stony pillow in the wilderness!

Secondly. Observe the vision which he had in his sleep. He saw in his dream "a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Let us consider this representation as it regarded the dreamer, and in its higher and ultimate signification.

1. What was its design with respect to Jacob? It intimated forgiveness and reconciliation. It seemed intended to assure him that, though driven from his natural home, and deprived of its comforts and protection, he had still a friend in heaven, whose Providence was still exercised over him for his safety and good; and that lonely and defenceless as his situation was, holy angels were the guardians of his waking and sleeping hours, and that the blessed God himself was about his path and observed all his ways. He therefore renewed the covenant made with his father, and assured him that the land on which he was then reposing should be given to him and to his posterity for a possession, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. And more than this, that He, the Lord God of Abraham and of Isaac, would be with him and keep him in all places whither he went, and would bring him again into this land, adding—"I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." The vision which he saw, and the voice that he heard, appear to have been the calling of Jacob to the peculiar service of God, and henceforth we find him a consistent and devout man to the end of his life. The Bethel scene was the turning point in his character and course.

2. But we must look further than the interest of Jacob in this matter. There is an evangelical reference in the whole of the affair. "He beheld a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven." Does not this

intimate the correspondence which unseen to mortal eye is kept up between heaven and earth? Thus our Lord said to Nathaniel—"Verily, verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." "Here is the true meaning of the ladder. He, "the desire of all nations," was always "the consolation of Israel." Here were His divinity and humanity: His humiliation and exaltation; the one extending to earth, the other to heaven; the medium of communication between the upper and the lower world; the Mediator between God and man. Every blessing comes to us through Him; even the angels He sends forth as ministering spirits to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation. They rejoice when a sinner repenteth. They encamp about those who fear the Lord, and deliver them from their dangers; and at last convey their departing spirits to Abraham's bosom. They ascended to receive their orders, and descended to execute them." They attended the Saviour in all His travels—announced His birth—ministered to Him in His temptation—sustained Him in His agony—rolled back the stone from His tomb—and at last—

"They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His throne;
Clapp'd their triumphant wings and cried,
The glorious work is done."

Thirdly. The impression which the dream produced on his mind. The text records it as that of deep reverence and awe. It was like that of Moses at the burning bush, when he put off his shoes from his feet, because the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Man is so far separated from God, that the sense of His presence terrifies him while yet in his unconverted state, and when renewed by the Holy Spirit, a solemn awe pervades his mind, when conscious that he stands before his Maker. Thus it was with Jacob in the instance before us. So ought it to be

with us, at the present moment. The house of prayer is a solemn awful place, it is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.

The effects of the vision in the night were remarkable. Jacob was afraid when he awoke. The man who felt no apprehension in the evening at lying down in the open air, enveloped in darkness and surrounded by danger, is afraid in the morning. But wherefore? The thought of God's presence. Ah! the nearer we draw to His seat, and the more we see of His perfections, the humbler we shall lie. The Scriptures tell us, that "He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."

The patriarch also expresses surprise at his position. He calls it *the house of God*. What a rebuke is this to persons whose bigoted attachment to any particular mode of building leads them to cry—"The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are *we*." Nothing makes any place sacred but the divine presence. There can be no sanctity in wood and stone. This says Jacob, of the bare ground on which he had seen and heard God—"this is none other than the house of God." Our Lord prayed and preached in private dwellings—in the open air—on the mountain's brow—by the way side, and from a fishing boat. So did the apostles. It was not till the end of the third century, that edifices were built expressly for Christian worship. And now—

"Where'er we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is holy ground."

The house of God is placed in close proximity to the gate of heaven. Not indeed that all who attend the one will enter the other. To some the house of God will be the gate of hell. The preaching of the word will be the savour of death unto death to many. But this is the effect of unbelief in them that hear it. The design of its publication is to convert, and sanctify, and comfort. And to all such the temple on earth leads to the temple above.

T. W. CRAIG.

DAVID'S DYING CHARGE TO SOLOMON.

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1 Kings ii. 1, 2.—*“Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon, his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man.”*

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In these words we see that death is no respecter of persons, for that the monarch no less than the subject, must in his turn, lay down on his bed and give up his spirit. The scene before us is solemnly impressive. The youth that had slain a giant is now, after a most eventful life, about to fall before a mightier arm than that of Goliath; the friend that had wept over his beloved Jonathan is now going the way of all the earth; the monarch who had exclaimed over the remains of a child still lovely in death, “I shall go to him, but he cannot return to me,” is now at the end of his last stage, and about to mingle his ashes with the departed. We will draw near, and hear his last words of parental tenderness, and dying counsel to his royal son and successor on the throne—“be thou strong, and shew thyself a man.”

“Be strong” is the exhortation of Moses to Joshua, and to Israel, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong,” is the admonition of an Apostle to all who profess the religion of Christ, and who have manifold temptations and trials to endure. And if there be any exhortation which ought to be often in the ears of those who have set their faces Zionward, such an exhortation is that to which we now direct your devout and most serious attention.

We are not in the situation of Solomon, no royal crown adorns our brow, no regal sceptre is placed in our hand. But we have a crown to win, a sceptre to obtain, a white robe of more than earthly purity, to acquire. And if the king of Israel needed strength, and was required to shew himself a man in the government of his kingdom, no less necessary—nay, onerous as the duties and cares of a Sovereign might be—far greater is the courage which the vigorous maintenance of our moral and religious principles demands. To this point we therefore direct our thoughts ; and shew, as best we may, how it behoves us to be strong and quit ourselves as men.

First—as it respects the truth and doctrines of the gospel. If on any question, manliness of character is demanded, it is on this. If the Scriptures are a *revelation* of God's will to man, receive them as such, and obey them accordingly. Like men embrace it, and stand fast in the faith, not wavering, as the waves of the sea are driven with the wind and tossed ; as the weak and unworthy halt between two opinions. Here is the first occasion for the exercise of manliness towards religion, but alas ! how many are there who, manly perhaps in many things besides, are here most irresolute, timid, hesitating or double-minded. There are many who only half believe, or who, while they profess to believe, take not a single serious step in obedience to its divine and imperative authority. Herein lies an egregious inconsistency. It is not acting as a man to own the Bible to be true, and at the same time treat it as if it were a fiction, a fable, a falsehood. It is not quitting ourselves like men, to admit it to be all that it claims to be, and yet refuse to pay it a devout reverence. The only path to the performance of the admonition, is that of prompt, decided, resolute action.

And who can listen to the awful truths that tell us of an eternity to come, of a judgment-seat at which all shall stand, of a region of eternal joy for all the servants of God,

and of a world of hopeless sorrow for all the wicked and impenitent, of salvation through a Mediator between God and man, for all who will in deep humility and trusting faith embrace his gospel and live according to godliness—and be indifferent to messages like these? We call upon you, therefore, to quit ye like men; to decide at once; to be strong, and no longer halt between belief and infidelity, between the charms of the world and the claims of God upon your homage and duty.

“What would you have us to do?” some one may be wont to enquire. I answer, it is to stand fast in the faith, and let the world see that you believe what you profess. Sustained by the clearest evidence, and published to the world by the highest authority, the word of God is worthy of all confidence. It is no doubtful question whether the Lord Jesus was sent by the Father to be the Saviour of the world, nor what is the substance of His doctrine and teaching. Whatever He has expounded, it is for us with a single, simple heart, to follow: to take the truth as He left it; to grasp it firmly as our life, and hold it with the same tenacity as a sinking man would hold the hand that was stretched forth to save him from the gurgling vortex. The precept is plain—“Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine, with sleights of men and cunning craftiness.” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” If we truly believe that we possess the treasure of a true revelation from God, then it is manly to espouse, to defend, to diffuse it, for its own inestimable value, for the honor of Him from whom it comes, for the purity, peace, and safety of our own souls, and for its power to regenerate and bless the world. For such a treasure it is the noblest business of our lives to shew ourselves men, and stand fast in the faith.

Secondly.—To carry out the admonition before us, is to shrink from no duty and no sacrifice which it may require. This is a wide branch of discourse, and we must condense

our observations. The Author of our life, the Giver of our blessings, the Saviour of our souls has spoken, and it remains that we listen and obey. The world, the flesh, and the devil will all unite to oppose it, and present a hundred obstacles and excuses. It is not the way of the *world*, even where the christian religion is professed, to render such obedience. A kind of respectful treatment of the word of God—nothing bold, nothing decided, nothing cordial, is all that it will render, and the love and fear of the world will prompt us to do no more. A still stronger persuasion of the *flesh* speaks from within. It is sloth, it is selfishness, it is the predominance of some master passion—intemperance, sinful pleasure, the lusts of the flesh, the gratification of baser appetites that was against the purity, the peace, the salvation of the soul, that govern the irreligious mind, and place men in rebellion against the will of God, and the dearest interests of the immortal spirit. Now and then it urges the doing of something that may allay the scourgings of conscience, and compose it for awhile, but this is all. If it can hush its cry, stay its lashings, and satisfy its demands when its voice is too loud to be disregarded, it is for awhile content. And then the *evil spirit*, the great tempter, the subtle adversary of men, will suggest all discontented and rebellious thoughts. He will awaken doubts as to the truth itself, insinuate suspicion, as he did in the case of our first parent, Eve, with respect to the divine commands, represent our Lord as a hard Master, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strewed.

Thus beset, multitudes, instead of quitting themselves like men, and resisting the devil, readily yield; and while they perhaps, honor God with their lips, they will do only as much and no more, follow His gospel as far and no further, than the usages, customs, and proprieties of society around them may require.

My brethren, this is not to shew ourselves men, endowed

with a sense of the obligations, the privileges, the just feelings of one who was made in the image of his Maker. This is not to be strong, to be steadfast and immoveable ; but weaker than the reed that trembles in the wind, and yields to every breeze. Does that person shew himself a man, who yields to every temptation to neglect the house of God on the sabbath, and to follow the allurements of pleasure ? Does that youth shew a manliness of mind who consents to the enticements of sinners, and surrenders himself to companionship with those whose house, the scriptures tell us, is the way to hell ? Does that individual shew himself a man that fears the reproach of the wicked, dreads the sneer of the scorner, and would rather be accounted a devil than a saint ? Does that misguided and miserable creature shew himself a man, who for the sake of indulging the lowest and worse than brutal propensities of his nature, will beggar his wife, starve his children, cover himself with rags, and make his home the scene of poverty, strife, and every hateful and disgusting passion ?

Or to take a more moderate and less extreme view of the question, Is it to act as a man to attend the service of God in a spirit in which he would be ashamed to fulfil any duty to an earthly master ? Ought we not to carry with us as Christians the same resolute and decided temper, the same open and obvious manliness in all matters that refers to eternity, as we do to those which are limited to time ? In the early ages of the Christian faith, many came forward with unflinching step to suffer the pains and win the crown of martyrdom. They were, perhaps, in some instances, unnecessarily eager for the dungeon, the scaffold, or the stake ; but it was the same spirit which we so much commend in every brave soldier that perishes in behalf of his country, and in every philanthropist who falls a victim to the pestilence he would hazard his life to subdue. In a word, to serve God, is to shew the same spirit towards Him, which every one of us who has the heart of a man would

shew in the defence of the health, the welfare, the happiness and the life of the members of his own family.

Finally. To carry out the admonition in the text, we must be bold and persevering in the work of God, till He shall relieve us from all further service. It is manly to begin well, but it is most unmanly to forsake, or negligently execute a great task once begun. Alas ! many have so acted. They have openly avowed themselves to be on the Lord's side, but have drawn back. And there are others who have in secret resolved to set out upon the way to eternal glory. No human eye may have discovered the resolve ; but it was before the Searcher of hearts, and was recorded in the Book which shall be opened in the judgment. Alas ! the way thus secretly entered was soon forsaken ; for the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches entering in, choked the word, and it became unfruitful. There is a mighty class of inducements to instability in religion, such as are not brought to operate on the mind in any other sphere of action. There is the whole mass of the corrupt and worldly inclinations of our nature, nourished and strengthened by perpetual contact with a world that lieth in wickedness, and from this source arises the conflict between the flesh and the spirit—the one would persuade us to turn to idols, the other would allure us upward and onward to purity and peace. Here, as every where, success and satisfaction are the recompense, not of half-deeds, but of manly hearty energy, industry and perseverance.

Who is sufficient for these things ? No one of himself : but He who gives us the command, will not fail us if we rely upon Him for its fulfilment. When He bids us be strong, He is ready to give us power to obey. Heaven is the prize, every effort shall have its reward. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have finished their manly course, and reached the crown. They invite us onward. Let us not fear the little troubles that may beset the way, but be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Arise, for the work is great, the time is short, but the prize is eternal.

T. W. HAMILTON, D.D.

HELP REQUESTED.

Acts xxi. 28.—“ *Men of Israel, help.*”

THERE are two proverbs in common use which are worthy universal observation. One of them is—“ He that will learn from no one but himself, is sure to have a fool for his teacher.” And the other says—“ A wise man is willing to learn the truth, even from an enemy.” Both these common sayings, are applicable to the practical purposes of religion, and the faithful exposition of the word of God. To a mind raised above the grovelling pursuits of animal existence, the sight of a well-cultivated field, or a beautiful landscape, or a flower, or an insect, will awaken interesting emotions and reflections. The succession of the seasons of the year, the rising and the setting sun, the eclipse, partial or total, of his beams, are fraught with instruction. It is most astonishing that science has taught the astronomer to calculate to a second of time for a hundred years to come, the re-appearance of a comet, or the eclipse of the sun or moon. This is one of the most wonderful achievements of the mind, while it displays the unerring regularity with which these heavenly bodies fulfil their rounds. The slightest change in their orbits, their motion, their size, would entirely falsify the calculations of the most scientific astronomer, while their undeviating course shews at once the accuracy of their reckoning, the immutable laws by which these luminaries in the skies are governed, and at the same time the wisdom, power, and upholding providence of Him who made and conducts them all. Well may we exclaim—“ O Lord, how manifold are thy works !” in wisdom hast thou made them

all. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The meditations of such a mind will be often profitable, and he will find—"Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks ; sermons in stones, and good in everything."

This train of thought was suggested to my mind by the solar eclipse which has recently occurred, and as perfectly applicable to the exclamation of the text ; in the practical use I would make of the words. I have said that we should learn from every thing all that it may teach us of truth and duty. The text was uttered by certain Jews from Asia, who endeavoured to stir up the mob at Jerusalem to murder Paul on a charge as false as it was vile, these enemies of the gospel, when they saw the apostle in the temple, stirred up the people, crying out and saying, Men of Israel, help.

I. Let us take a brief glance at the circumstances of the case.

The parties to whom these evil disposed persons appealed for aid to enable them to carry out their murderous purpose, were Israelites who inhabited Jerusalem. They are addressed as men of Israel, but we must remember that they were not all Israel who belonged to that nation by natural descent, for he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter. Neither the men who used the appellation, nor those to whom it was given, were Israelites in the highest and most sacred sense of the term.

They called for help: but it was in a bad cause, and for a bad end. It was to enable them to commit a barbarous outrage upon one of their own nation—a man beloved and honored of God.

True as some things were which excited their fury, they were honourable to Paul. They alleged against him, that he taught the Gentiles as well as the Jews, that Jesus was the Christ; and that He had died on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. He had said, that His success in turning men from

darkness to light by preaching Christ was in perfect accordance with the promise made to Abraham their father, was just what they might have expected, since "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed"—a promise repeated to Isaac and to Jacob, and was confirmed by numerous testimonies of the prophets. They had said that Messiah should have the heathen for His inheritance—that all kings should fall down before Him, and all nations serve Him : that men should be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed. "I will give thee," said Jehovah, "for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth." "For from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles."

Nothing can be a stronger proof of the dreadful blindness of the unbelieving Jews, under which they have laboured from that day to this, than their wilful disregard of these express declarations of their own prophets. This only could have occasioned their forbidding the apostle to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. The conduct of the Messiah, and the success that has attended the ministry of the gospel, are perfectly consonant with these inspired predictions, and leave the Jews to this hour without excuse for their unbelief. Alas ! had they known the things that belonged to their peace, when they were so clearly set before them, they would have called on the men of Israel to co-operate with Paul instead of helping to destroy him.

II. But we may adopt the cry for help as our own—not to destroy but to save—not to commit an outrage, but, peace and good will. And if you are of the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh—if ye are partakers of like precious faith with faithful Abraham, and are rightly surnamed with the name of Israel, you will cheerfully respond to the cry for help—for help in the cause of God and Christ.

But can God need our help? In one sense He does not: but He condescends to use it, He is pleased to require it, and He will graciously accept it, if we offer it sincerely. He could do all Himself: or millions of angels would be cheerfully employed by Him in this service. But He has committed this treasure to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man. He chooses to employ human instruments to carry on His purposes of mercy to a fallen world. There is a great difference between the agents and the effects in building up His cause. The minister—the subscriber—the widow with her mite—the humble contributions of the poor and needy who give of their penury, no less than the magnificent contributions of the rich and mighty, are all humble instrumentality compared with the effects of the gospel which is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth. He could do without us—but He stoops to request the exertions and liberality of His people to carry on the interests of religion.

Some may say—"We can do nothing worth doing in this affair." You can obey God if you are not more inclined to disobey Him. If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man giveth, be it much or little. If when Moses was bidden to stretch out his rod over the sea, he had said, "My stick cannot divide the waters; God must do it; and He cannot need my services"—would not his disobedience have been highly criminal? Or if the Israelites when they entered Canaan, had said: "God does not need our exertions to drive out these wicked nations; He can strike them dead in an instant, we will therefore be content to dwell with them till God shall see fit to destroy them"—would they not have been most wicked in His sight?

Some there are, who think that zeal for the maintenance of the cause of Christ, is an unrighteous interference with the decrees and purposes of God. We reply to such persons—Men never excuse their negligence by such reasoning, when their hearts are set upon the object to be obtained.

No rigid predestinarian who loves money, would apologize for a servant who had defrauded him, or a knave who had outwitted him in a bargain, by saying, "Well, the man was predestinated to do it, and after all I shall be as rich as God has decreed I should be. If you had a child sick with a dangerous fever, you would not say, "Since there is an appointed time for man upon earth, if God has decreed that my child shall live, He will raise him up, I shall therefore leave it in His hands, and seek no medical advice." He could keep you alive without food—give you rest and strength without sleep—preserve the ship at sea in the heaviest tempest without the intervention of nautical skill—and bring the vessel safely to land, without the pilot to direct its course. But these things He does not do. And the man would be justly chargeable with the utmost degree of insanity who should neglect the use of means lest he should infringe on the decrees and sovereignty of God. Now remark—*God's decrees are His own rule—His commands are our rule.* Secret things belong to Him, but those that are revealed to us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of His law. His purpose shall stand, and he will do all His pleasure, yet this does not discharge us from the use of means, either in things temporal or spiritual. Dreadful was the denunciation of the angel who said, "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." God grant that none of us may ever fall under this malediction !

We have thus, I hope, established the principle—what is the help, which as men professing religion we are called upon to render to the cause of the gospel? There is first the help of *prayer*. Men of Israel—men of God, help *this* cause by your intercessions at the throne of grace. The fervent inwrought prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Paul asked for this kind of help. "Brethren pray for us." And of Him whose name is to endure for ever, it is said—

“Prayer shall be made for Him continually, and daily shall He be praised.”

Men of Israel help by your *contributions*. If your prayers are sincere, you will not withhold your aid in this respect. You will not say—“My body is the Lord’s, for He made it: my soul is His, for He bought it with His blood ; but my money is my own, and I will not give even a penny a week, to maintain His cause.” There are few who would say this in words, but there are vast multitudes who say it in effect, by withholding even their mite from the interests of Christ. It is a melancholy reflection, that there are thousands of the professors of the gospel, who can expend pounds in the course of a year upon pleasure—amusements—personal indulgence, who grudge a solitary shilling for the cause of Christ ! What account they may be able to give of their stewardship when called upon by the Judge eternal, the day of judgment will reveal.

There are other ways in which you may help forward the interests of the Redeemer. By the judicious guidance of your households, by a serious and steady attendance on the worship of God, by endeavouring to bring others under the sound of the word, and by the exemplification of the religion of Christ, you may all help much the cause for which the Saviour died. I now leave the consideration of this subject to your own reflections and the Divine blessing. Now to God, &c.

J. RYLAND, D.D.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

Matthew xvii. 20, 21.—“*If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.*”

THE use of words in somewhat dissimilar senses, must be borne in mind by all who would rightly study and understand the sacred writings. This is the case with respect to the terms Grace, Peace, Righteousness, Justification, with many others; and in none more so than with that of *Faith*, the important subject of my text. It is questionable if any point of doctrine has been more indiscreetly handled than this, arising from want of attention to the peculiarities of its meaning in different passages of Scripture. It is true that the apostle distinctly affirms,—“There is one faith”—that is, *one object of faith*. But this does not restrict the word to a single sense when applied to its degree and quality, as unfolded in human character.

Divines have generally adopted the three divisions of historical, temporary, and saving faith. Without tying ourselves to any systematic arrangement, we may observe, that the word is used to denote the Christian religion generally—sometimes to express the belief or persuasion of the lawfulness of an action—sometimes it imports the doctrine of the faith as contained in the gospel. St. James uses it to denote a mere assent to the truth of the Christian system without any influence on the heart and conduct—“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” On the other hand St. Paul in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, uses it in its full meaning—

a deep conviction of the truth of the gospel—a firm reliance on Christ and His atonement—an utter rejection of all legal observances as the efficient cause of salvation. “Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.”

But in the text, and in several other passages of Scripture, it is employed in a sense peculiar to the apostles and to their high mission. This is designated, *miraculous faith*; or that faith in Christ to which, at the first propagation of the gospel, the gift of working miracles was annexed.

It was to this species of faith that our Lord refers in the words before us. He employs the strong oriental figure of removing mountains, as the result of such a principle, even while yet minnte “as a grain of mustard seed”—a phrase proverbially used by the Jews to express the smallness of any object. Yet, although in its primary sense it was thus local and restricted, still, like all the gracious utterances of the Great Prophet, it was intended for spiritual application and instruction to all His disciples of every age and country to the end of time. Let us then consider the doctrine of faith under the several heads as may be deduced from the text.

First. One of the characteristics of faith is *progressive growth*. The Jews were essentially a rural people. The fields, the gardens, the orchards, the vineyards, were their favorite resorts, as well as the stated scenes of their accustomed occupations. They were therefore abundantly supplied with familiar images by which to illustrate moral and religious subjects. Our blessed Saviour, adapting the style of His preaching to the habits of His hearers, arrayed His thoughts with all the varied dress of rustic scenery. The parable of the sower, and of the husbandman who planted a vineyard—the application of the name of Shepherd to himself, and of sheep to His disciples—His reference to the lilies of the field, to the barren fig-tree, to the vine and its branches, to the ploughman who must not look back if he

would avoid making an imperfect and crooked furrow—the comparison of the wicked to the tares, of the good to the wheat, which for a season grow together in the field of the farmer; of himself to a green tree, and of the world to a dry and withered one—are all instances of that wise method of instruction which dictated His assimilation of faith to a grain of mustard seed, which first swells unseen beneath the surface, then germinates, and lastly, bursting from beneath the clod, rapidly advances to a spreading tree, whose branches afford a shelter to the birds of the air, and whose foliage affords a cooling shade from the heat of a midday sun.

Faith, then, is a divine principle, implanted in the heart by the inward agency of the Holy Spirit, generally through the instrumentality of the word; and which is to be improved and matured by daily cultivation. It is indeed the germ of the religious life; and has a vital connexion with both the understanding and the soul, the mind and the heart. Even in its first and weakest state, it is more powerful to apprehend God and His mercy through Christ, and to remove the mountain of unbelief, than all the disquisitions of human reason, and the profoundest exercises of the human intellect. “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven,” said our Lord in reference to the Baptist, “is greater than he.” This is to say—that the merest babe in the power of the gospel over the heart, is greater than was John as a prophet under the old dispensation. Nor is there any precept more emphatically laid down in Holy Scripture than the necessity of making progress in the religious life, of pressing onward to higher degrees of faith, and of adding to faith, “virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in us and abound, we shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

A *second* characteristic of true faith is its *mighty power*. Probably our Lord was gazing on one of the hills of Jerusalem when He thus expressed Himself—"Ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." These are strong expressions, they point figuratively to the removal of that burden of sin, which bears upon the heart with all the pressure of a mountain load. What human ingenuity could never have effected, the hand of Omnipotence is able to accomplish by the simplest process. Faith is the chosen instrument which He has provided for the relief of the soul from its burden of guilt and sorrow. The winds and the storms of our own resolutions may beat upon the fortress of sin within us, but they cannot beat it down. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only power that can overthrow it. By means of its resistless force the mighty pile becomes broken up, scattered abroad, and swept away. And faith possesses all this transcendent efficacy, because it is a fragment of power detached from the Omnipotent Himself, and communicated to man through the agency of the Eternal Spirit. It is the gift of Him who is denominated the Lord of Hosts, the Lord mighty in battle; whose throne is heaven, and whose footstool is earth; who has the clouds for His chariot, the thunder for His voice; who holdeth the mountains in the hollow of His hand—symbols all of His universal agency and illimitable power.

Do you require proof of the efficacy of faith? See the centurion's servant rising all at once from the bed of sickness. Hear the commendation and the assurance addressed to the Canaanitish woman whose daughter was tormented by a devil, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Behold the palsied sufferer standing upright and released from the double load of his malady and its cause, "Son be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." Mark too that languishing felon on the cross—hope is playing on his features, and yet he is dying; and dying

amid scorn and shame and in the very bosom of guilt! Why is the groan of anguish suspended, and the look of despair changed into an aspect of serenity? Why? Hark! a voice of more than earthly sweetness—of more than angelic music has just sounded on his ear—"Verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." What! a criminal going with Christ to heaven! Yes, his faith hath saved him. He believed the first evidences presented to him of the divinity of the Son of God; and the mountain which was crushing him into hell, suddenly rolled away, and joy rose superior to pain!

Brethren, shall we reject this prescribed medium of acceptance and rely upon our own feeble resolutions to resist temptation and win the prize? Alas! like Sampson shorn of his locks, we shall rise to the combat in vain. Our foes will be too mighty for us. We have Mount Atlas to lift up, and all human implements are too fragile for the work!

As a *last particular* we are reminded in the text, of the way in which faith effects its mighty achievements." "Howbeit, this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The phrase, "this kind goeth not out," has reference to the expulsion of devils from the bodies of men. These evil spirits were permitted to possess the human person during the stay of Christ upon earth, and for a period afterwards, while the power of working miracles was yet upon the apostles. These tormentors would not be expelled but by the prayer of faith and self-denial.

The same admonition is conveyed to us. That faith which will enable us to disburden the soul of the mountain weight of sin, we must seek by prayer and self-denial. Prayer is to open the bosom—to draw down the morning and the evening dew to refresh the grain of mustard seed, and swell the tender bud.

But what is *prayer*? Not the unfelt utterance of customary words, the mechanical bending of the knee, but the impulsive desire, the fervent longing of the heart, full of

earnestness to obtain the offered petition. This is prayer, and when thus presented through Christ and in His name, "availeth much."

But what is *fasting*? It is not the mere formality of a stated abstinence from food. This must depend upon bodily constitution and strength to bear it. Much less is it the substitution of one article of diet for another, as though it were more acceptable to God to regale the appetite with luxuries extracted from the deep, than with the flesh of the cattle that crop the herbage. Fasting is another term for self-denial, such as that to which we are summoned when Christ sends us a cross which we must take up if we would be His disciples. In short, it is not the infliction of voluntary austerities, which are often productive of spiritual pride, but in the stern resolve, God's grace assisting us, to cut off a right hand, if it be the occasion of sin; to pluck out a right eye, if we cannot otherwise subdue a darling lust. This is Christian self-denial. And both the strength and grace for its endurance must be sought of God, "who worketh in us both to will and to do."

In conclusion. We have seen faith to be the healing plant by which the soul is cleansed from sin. The Lord Jesus is its object. It is the office of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, to drop it as the grain of mustard seed into the human heart. And daily abstinence from wilful sin will cause the soul to relish the spiritual blessings He imparts. Faith is a seed from the celestial soil. Nothing earthly can cause it to fructify. The dew of that Spirit which first brought it down, can alone cherish it.

J. E. EVERITT.

J E H O V A H - J I R E H .

Genesis **xxii.** 14.—“ *And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*”

EVERY one moderately acquainted with the Scriptures must be aware, that it was the custom, especially in early times, to give names to persons, places, and things, significant of some remarkable event connected with them. In many instances this was done with a view to commemorate some signal display of divine providence, and to perpetuate the seasonable interposition of the Almighty in delivering from danger. Rachel dying, called the son whose birth had cost the mother her life, Benoni, but his father called him Benjamin—the son of his old age; Hagar’s well was called Beerlahai-roi; Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah-nissi. And Samuel erected a stone in commemoration of a victory, and called it Ebenezer—the Lord is our help. These with many others too numerous to be mentioned, were given by these pious persons to transmit to the latest posterity a record of the signal interpositions of God in favour of His people, especially in seasons of peculiar distress and tribulation. So in the text—Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen; or as it may be rendered—In the mount the Lord shall be seen. This is the sense given to the passage by the poet:—

“ Just in the last distressing hour—
The Lord displays delivering power:
The mount of danger is the place,
Where we shall see surprising grace.”

From the passage thus introduced we plainly derive the following sentiment—*In the season of extremity, God appears for the relief of His people.* He may permit them to be reduced to great straits, and to suffer much distress, but sooner or later He opens a way of deliverance, and not unfrequently by the most unexpected means. The pages of Sacred Scripture supply us with many illustrations of this fact. The memorable trial of the Patriarch's faith, and of his parental feelings, to which the text refers, is one of the numerous instances of the truth of this doctrine. The command to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering was not recalled till the third day after it was given, when the scene was on the point of consummation. There was therefore ample time for the exercise of all the tender emotions of the parental heart, for the preparation of the fearful and unprecedented sacrifice, till the knife was actually grasped, when at the very crisis of the deadly deed, the angel cried—*"Abraham forbear."*

The case of Jacob in his interview with Esau is another instance of the same kind. With 400 men marching against him, under the command of a brother whose feelings were those of deadly hate, the defenceless patriarch, in this extremity, surrounded by his helpless family, was called to confront him. Alarmed at the prospect, he had recourse to prayer, but there is no immediate interposition. The anxiety of Jacob must be wrought up to its highest pitch before relief appears. At the interview, God turned the heart of Esau from hatred to kindness, and thus fulfilled the sentiment in the text, that in the moment of danger deliverance shall come.

The same truth appears in the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. Another king arose who knew not Joseph, and the Hebrews were reduced to a state of bondage most oppressive. Still the day of their redemption lingered. Three hundred years must elapse ere it shall arrive. In the mean time they must make bricks without straw, be

beaten by their taskmasters, their male infants drowned, and their entire condition become unbearable. Then when hope had fled, when all was dark and dismal in their prospects, their groaning was heard by the ear of a greater king than Pharaoh, and on a night much to be remembered, He led them forth with a strong hand and stretched out arm from the yoke of the oppressor. How often, also, was David in the extremity of distress ere he was delivered! Now obliged to flee for his life, to avoid the deadly weapon that was hurled against him; and presently required to wait patiently for the Lord till He should be raised up out of some horrible pit and miry clay—metaphors expressive of extreme distress. But the time would fail me to speak of Hezekiah, of the three Hebrew youths in Babylon, of Daniel, Jonah, Jeremiah and many others who were delivered in the very moment of the greatest danger by the signal interposition of the providence of God, whose watchful eye never slumbers.

Times more recent than these will supply us with similar illustrations. Witness the low and afflicted state of the followers of Christ at the time of the Reformation, when darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the masses of the people. How wonderfully and unexpectedly did God appear in raising up Luther and his followers in Germany, Calvin in Switzerland and Geneva, with Bucer, Huss, Jerome, Melancthon and a host of other fearless men who dared to brave the thunders of the Vatican; and with the word of God in their hand, laughed at the fulminations of the papal see! And in our own country, when the bigotted and wrathful Mary had caused to be martyred the pillars of the Protestant faith, almost suddenly her soul is required of her, and she is summoned to that tribunal where Queens are on a level with the lowest of the race! And when at a later period, the second James had all but restored the Popish superstition, the Prince of Orange is wafted to our shores, and the British throne is vacated for his reception! In all

these events the devout reader of history will recognize the seasonable interference of Him who governs the world.

Experience in every age may be adduced in confirmation of the sentiment suggested in the text. How often when the last ray of hope has been on the point of expiring, has the disease been rebuked, and in the language of Scripture, the life brought up from the grave! "Lo, these things God worketh oftentimes with men!" And when the Spirit of truth convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, frequently trouble and anguish lay hold upon the soul, and continue till despair has begun to drink up its strength. The three thousand on the day of Pentecost were pricked in the heart before they obtained the joys of God's salvation. In these, and in all other conceivable cases, He, in whose hand are all our times, *could*, if it had pleased Him, have delivered His people before they were reduced to such painful extremities. But there are reasons for His conduct, which, however we may be unable to divine them, are founded in equity, wisdom, and love. Let us endeavour to suggest a few that appear at least probable, if not conclusive.

1. Severe trials are intended to prove the strength and purity of our faith. It is an established principle in the life of every Christian, that he must walk by faith, not by sight. There are mysteries in every thing above, beneath, around, and within us, which the most penetrating genius has never been able to solve; and which will remain undeveloped till the light of eternity shall disclose whatever is hidden, and disperse all that is obscure. In the mean time we are to wait till that hour shall arrive. Afflictions put this principle to the test. It is the storm that tries the seaworthiness of the ship, and the skill of its commander. St. Peter represents the trial of faith as far more precious than that of gold which perisheth, however refined and purified by the fire, that it may appear unto honour and glory. God tries His people, not for His own information

but for their's ; that they may know what they are. He that faints in the day of adversity is a weak believer, unlike the patriarch in the scene before us.

2. And may not another reason be, to stir us up to fervency in prayer? When all things run smoothly, and the sun shines upon our path, the heart is apt to forget God, and grow careless in devotional exercises. Afflictions are messengers from heaven, and they tell us that there is One there who would hear from us. We are to pray without ceasing—that is, we are to cherish the spirit and habit of devotion under all circumstances. It is the character of a hypocrite, that he will not always call upon God. There are birds, the naturalist tells us, that only make a noise at the approach of bad weather: and there are persons who only pour out a prayer when God's chastening hand is upon them. Yet what is always proper, may be sometimes peculiarly seasonable and necessary. And this is the case when we are in the furnace of affliction. Therefore says God, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." "Is any afflicted? Let him pray."

3. We may also add, that the hand of God appears more obviously when He delivers just at the crisis of danger. When human help has done all it can do, and has failed, then it is that the arm of Omnipotence most signally appears in bringing relief. Then we see that God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

There is one great practical lesson put before us in the subject we have now reviewed. It teaches us this important and consoling duty—*never to despair of divine help when we are pursuing the path of Christian obedience.* We must never yield to despondency while we are following the way which we know from the word of God to be right. It was this that supported Abraham in the trying scene to which the text refers. We have had many merciful interpositions in our behalf, and the remembrance should confirm our

confidence with respect to the present and the future, teaching us to sing—

“ His love in time past forbids me to think,
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

D. C. LANSING, D.D.

HEAVEN—AN ENDLESS LIFE.

Hebrews vii. 16.—“ *The power of an endless life.*”

SUCH is the nature of that life which Christ came to secure for the children of men. It is life; and life in its noblest sense; glorious, divine, eternal, in comparison with which, all that we have known of existence in this world is but a dream. The power of such a life! What a mighty theme! Life endless, unchangeable, save only from accumulating glory, perpetual in its freshness, and boundless in its infinitude for ever and ever!

It is this glory which is held out for our attainment. We who are here even in the death of trespasses and sins, are invited to seek it. We know not as yet, either death or life, absolutely; we are only able to approach it in idea, not in reality. Soon, however, we *shall* know, once for all. We shall know by experience what life is and what death is; what life is by possessing it, and what death is by entering upon it.

It was to secure for us such a life, and to redeem us from the cause of death, that Christ came. He was made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, that is to say, one that had merely to do with the body and with time. He was constituted, not for any temporary purpose, but in accordance with the plan of an eternal salvation. Had it been a finite misery to be avoided, or a finite glory to be gained,—a limited life on the one side, or a limited death on the other, then a High Priest made after the law of a carnal or mortal commandment would have been sufficient. Then in that case, there had been no need for the Divine Word to be made flesh, or the sacrifice of the only Son of God to be offered. But the life and death, the guilt and the redemption, being boundless as eternity, a Saviour is necessary who possesses the power of an endless life. Such we take to be the argument of the apostle in the passage before us. The expression is vast and significant, let us proceed to consider some of the things included in it.

“The power of an endless life”—what is it? It is *a perfect life*. They who enter upon it are without fault before the throne of God. There is no sin, no defilement, no spot, nor wrinkle, nor fear of evil. On the contrary, a purity and a perfection so infinite, that it is just a transfiguration into the holiness of the Lord of life and glory. The bliss of such a state is at present beyond the conception of a mortal mind, and therefore an apostle has said that it doth not yet appear what we shall be, only this we know, that we shall be like Christ: a likeness to Him both in body and spirit, which will constitute our completeness. We can have while on earth but an inadequate idea of the bliss included in a perfect freedom from sin, much less of the infinite glory of being one with Christ even as He in His spirit, and work, and essential nature, was one with the Father.

2. In the second place—this endless life is *a social life*. All the communicative and companionable tendencies of our nature and powers of our being, will be exercised in an

enjoyment intensified by being shared with the beatific experience of others. St. Paul in this epistle says that in Mount Zion we shall be introduced to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first born whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the just made perfect. The sight of others in glory will be infinite joy, a study of salvation, a rapture of delight. There will be the good and the holy of all ages and all worlds to love and rejoice with. There will be communion with Christ, sweeter than on the way to Emmaus, more frank and more loving than it hath entered the heart of man to imagine. The power of an endless life would find sweet employment, a full and boundless theme of study in the investigation of the works of God, His providence and grace. Then will be revealed to all the principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God in the salvation of man. There will be mutual study, nothing solitary, nothing exclusive, no need of guardian forms of courtesies, nor any distant or reserved civilities—no sense either of superiority or inferiority—all pride, jealousy, distrust, and envy, can find no entrance there. Divine love is the atmosphere of heaven ; its blessed inhabitants dwell in love, for they dwell in God, and God is love ; and in sweet forgetfulness of self, the happiness of others is as dear and delightful to each as their own. What a pleasing thought, that some we once knew and loved are now basking in the beams of such bliss as this in the immediate fruition and presence of God! The days of their mourning are ended.

3. *It is a progressive life.* The power of an endless life! The idea is truly magnificent. The idea of the life of an antediluvian—a life of a thousand years, is grand and imposing. A thousand years! What may not be accomplished in such a tract of time on earth, with energies unfettered and a heart undrooping! What an accumulation of impulse and of power from generation to generation! But a thousand years are as one day in the arithmetic of an endless

life. Our plans on earth are contracted, fragmentary broken and incomplete ; but in the infinitude of eternal existence, there will be nothing to prevent the execution of schemes encompassing all ages and all worlds. All fountains of grace and strength are open, and every needful resource at hand. The understanding will be divinely illumined, the memory retentive and capacious. Here all is haste, or anxiety, or confusion, but with the unnumbered ages of eternity at disposal, there is perfect leisure. There will be progression in *holiness*—we mean in the power of holy habit. Perfect in the righteousness of Christ, there can be no improvement in the legal qualification for heaven; but as star differeth from star in glory, so in the reflection of that glory, which will be brighter and brighter as the soul knows more and more of the holiness and character of God. This is one element in the power of an endless life. On that power all the opposing hosts of the universe might be let loose with safety; not one single impulse of the soul would be moved from its repose; not one feeling would be shaken in its immutable fastening to the throne of God. Such is the triumphant language of St. Paul—"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come—shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

There will be progression in *knowledge*. For this there will be boundless room throughout eternity. In this endless life, there will be still before the mind fresh and inexhaustable stores of knowledge which, as the full soul expands, will attract and charm the heart. After millions of ages have passed away, we shall be yet on the threshold of the glory that lies before us. Here we cannot comprehend infinitude, for who can find out the Almighty to perfection? We want the fire—the winged chariot of inspiration, to carry us through this illimitable field; and even then we should fall short of comprehending the incommunicable

nature of the divine attributes. What heart can conceive, what mind can measure, even in imagination, the infinite riches of the Creator's wisdom and love! Well might an apostle, on reviewing the kingdoms of redemption and grace, exclaim—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

And thus the power of an endless life will progress in delight, in joy, in happiness unutterable, inconceivable. For ever increasing with the increase of the knowledge of God in Christ, ages on ages shall witness an undiminished freshness and novelty in the glory still to be revealed; a capacity of bliss for ever enlarging and a volume of pleasure for ever accumulating. The joy arising from a sense of the love of God can have no limit—nay must be, in the nature of things, positively and eternally progressive. What raptures are produced even now, in the midst of torture and suffering, by the manifestation of God to the soul! In many cases, we may see the dying saint racked with pain, yet swimming in a sea of glory; almost torn asunder with the pangs of bodily anguish, yet is the inward spirit under the communications of God to the soul, filled with serene, ineffable delight. "The chamber where the good man breathes his last, is privileged beyond the common vale of life, just on the verge of heaven."

The experience of a dying servant of God, recorded not long since, was in these words. "This is heaven begun. I have done with darkness for ever, *for ever* with emphasis. Satan is vanquished. Nothing now remains but salvation with glory—eternal glory." This was of God. It is His smile, His presence, His love that cheers the pilgrim through the valley. It is a power and a bliss beyond the power of nature, or the fortitude of philosophy. Let reason, and naturalism, and rationalism, do the utmost with their forces; let them call in all the powers of art, nature, science, imagination, they can produce nothing like this, nothing of this ;

neither can they account for this. It is a mystery, a gift, a glory of God's own making. It is the power of an endless life begun in the soul : a glimpse of the glory to be revealed. And who then can reach to any adequate conception of the happiness of the spirit of the just made perfect in that world of light where God dwells—a world triumphant over all evil, where, free from all sin, darkness, pain, unbelief, every object is pure, clear, celestial, radiant and blessed?

Beloved brethren, how does this subject interest you? This endless life is the portion of the righteous. We may not presume on its enjoyment, apart from the regeneration of the heart, and faith in Christ. It is a life prepared for the servants of God, when their work is done. "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

G. B. CHEEVOR.

REBELLION AND PARDON.

Daniel ix. 9, 10.—*"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets."*

In this chapter we have a most remarkable instance of the spirit of prayer. The prophet Daniel, beholding the general impenitence of the Jews during their captivity, is deeply affected, and earnestly entreats the Lord on their behalf. He knew that the day of their return to their own land was

drawing near, and he therefore makes it a subject of fervent intercession that the Lord in the greatness of His mercy would pardon them, and finally bring them to that heavenly city, of which the earthly Jerusalem was but a type. He says—"I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." He acknowledges the sins, the ingratitude, the rebellion, the perverseness, the guilt of his brethren; and with impassioned importunity, throws himself and his countrymen entirely on the divine mercy—How solemn and urgent his plea! "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God."

In the text, which comprises a part of his address, he confesses their rebellion and disobedience, reminding them that to Him against whom they had committed enormous crimes, belonged mercies and forgivenesses, and therefore they were still encouraged to seek and hope for mercy. But the words of the prophet are of no private or temporary application. We have sinned as had the Jews. We need mercy as did they. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, *now* as well as *then*, and we therefore have the same encouragement to draw near to God, that we may receive remission of sin.

I. Thus considered, the text sets before us man's iniquity and sin. This is the first point to be considered. We have rebelled, disobeyed, and refused to listen to His voice as uttered in His word by His servants the prophets. He hath given us laws; but we have broken them. He hath shewn us mercies, but we have requited them with ingratitude. He hath endowed us with life, and every day maintains it; but instead of devoting it to His glory, alas! how often is it spent in the service of sin! In this respect the world presents a melancholy aspect to our view. It is the charge which God himself brings against us, that every soul of man is both by nature and practice a rebel against Him. "There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth

good and sinneth not." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Look which way we will, the fact meets our eye. Not one innocent creature can be found among the innumerable millions of mankind. There is none good, no, not one. They are all gone out of the way. They are altogether become sinful. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Let no one attempt to escape this heavy charge, by thinking that he is an exception to this sweeping declaration. In this matter there is no exception. It is the case with all. All indeed are not going in the same road of rebellion, disobedience, and iniquity: but all have gone in some way of this sort. All have not sinned in the same manner nor in the same degree, but all have transgressed against the same God. What a thought! What a spectacle! All sinners! All rebels! All disobedient to His word! All walking in other ways, and not in those holy, just, and good laws which He has set before us!

And then the *consequence*. The wages of sin is death. A just Governor must punish the convicted delinquent. A righteous Sovereign must inflict the penalty awarded by law on the traitor to the throne. God is just, and will by no means spare the guilty—no, not even an angel when he incurs the penalties of His wrath. What then shall become of guilty man? What then shall be the consequences of his rebellion—his apostasy—his sin? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God,"—"indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile."

This is the law. Every sinner deserves to die. As sinners we are all sentenced to death: no pleas can avert the doom—no fancied goodness can cover our guilt. What then is to be done? Must we despair? Is there no way of escape? There is, and this is the next point in the text we have to consider.

II. The prophet mentions the abounding grace of God—
 “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses.”
 What a surprising declaration! That a God infinitely holy and just—a Being who has displayed these attributes in the everlasting condemnation of fallen angels, should design mercy, and plan a way of pardon and acceptance to our sinful race, is indeed a subject for our wonder and admiration. Yet so it is. He has thoughts of peace and not of evil towards the children of men. Amazing act of love! Jesus Christ, the second person in the Sacred Trinity, undertook the gracious work. Because we deserved to suffer, He would suffer in our stead. Because we had forfeited our life, He would for a while surrender His own, that we may regain it. Because we had earned the wages of sin which is death, He would transfer the merit of His own purity and obedience, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law, and confer upon us the adoption of sons. Because we were obnoxious to His Father’s wrath, to save us from it, He undertook to bear it in our stead. Here indeed we see mercies and forgivenesses. Here is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Upon His death, hang the destinies of man. If He did not die, we are yet in our sins, under their power and penalty and the sentence of condemnation. But by His sacrifice on the cross, there is a way opened for the exercise of mercy and pardon, consistent at once with the holiness and justice of God the Judge of all. All who come to God through Him, He saves to the uttermost. Having made a full atonement for sin, He forgives the sins of all them that believe. No sins are too great; no rebellions too numerous; no disobedience too heinous for His grace to set aside.

Any, all may come ; and all that do come are freely welcome. So far from being cast out, they shall be received and saved.

Does any one, then, feel his guilt and long for forgiveness? Let him hear the voice of Christ—"Fear not, I have redeemed thee, thou art mine. "Look to me, and thou shalt be saved. Does any one say, "I am an old hardened sinner, I have multiplied my sins and rebellions against God; may I be saved?" Yes, for mercies and forgivenesses are His, and He has said—"Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Read the text, read the whole Bible, and you will find that it proclaims a free and full salvation through the blood and righteousness of Christ, for all that flee for refuge to Him. The plain doctrine of Scripture is—that every penitent and contrite soul that believes in Christ, shall assuredly be saved; but every one who does not believe in Him will certainly perish.

III. The third and last particular suggested in the text, is the free grace of God in bestowing mercies and forgivenesses upon sinful men.

The natural mind is mistaken on this point, and generally averse to the doctrine. Man is prone to believe, that he can, at least, do something towards meriting a title to heaven. He thinks that on the ground of some good thing performed by him, or some good thing that is in him, he might be saved; and that God is too merciful to condemn him for a few errors of heart, and a few sins of life. But the Scripture explodes this notion altogether. What saith it with respect to the heart: "Deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." What saith it with respect to man's thought? "They are only evil continually." What is its testimony with respect to His words? "How can ye, being evil speak good things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh?" What saith it of his actions? "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Where then

is there goodness? Let the best man, that ever lived since the creation, produce the best action he ever performed—let him spread it before God, and claim his reward—and what shall be its deserts? Heaven? No. Why? Not because he hath done that good deed, but because he hath not done it to that pure and holy extent which a perfect law requires. To speak commercially for the sake of illustration, the man as an insolvent, offers to God as his creditor a *composition*—a part of what he owes for the whole. This can not be accepted: for by the deeds of the law no man living can be justified.

It hence follows, that salvation is a matter of grace; all of grace; “not of works, lest any man should boast.” “Mercies and forgivenesses belong to the Lord, and are freely bestowed, without money and without price.” In a word, no man is pardoned because he deserves or is worthy of it, but because God delighteth in mercy, and will shew forth the praise and glory of His grace, in the forgiveness and salvation of all His creatures who will turn to Him in penitence and prayer through the infinite merits of the sacrifice and death of Christ.

This then is the gospel: the doctrine which St. Paul teaches, when he tells us, that we are saved freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, and that He freely forgives, fully justifies, and accepts as perfectly righteous those who are found in Him.

To apply the subject, we observe, that it should lead us to *self-examination* into the state of our hearts. Daniel was deeply convinced of the rebellion and disobedience of the people against the Lord—are we? He knew the awful consequences of his sins, as exposing the whole nation to the wrath of heaven—do we consider this? Are we, like the prophet, filled with shame and confusion of face because of our trespasses against the Lord? And brethren, while we renounce every plea of merit, as Daniel did, do we throw

ourselves upon the mercy of the Lord our God, who for Christ's sake, forgiveth us? These are plain and solemn questions, and each should ask his own heart for an answer.

The subject *administers comfort and encouragement to the sin oppressed spirits*. Are any among us deeply humbled before God, on account of their sin? Let all such be of good cheer. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Why should we doubt His willingness or His ability? Did He not come into the world to save sinners? Did He not die that man may live? Does He not call the weary and heavy laden to Himself, and promise them rest? Then come. Since He gives you a free warrant, come and take the blessing, and go on your way rejoicing.

But finally. The text proclaims a solemn *warning* to those who trust in themselves that they are righteous. Does any one hope to be saved for their work's sake? Be not deceived. Such hope has no more solidity than the spiders web. It cannot stand. In that day when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it must be swept away. When the rain shall descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, what will become of the fair, self-made building which you fancy will stand the shock? It will fall, and not a vestige remain. Renounce brethren, your self-righteous hopes, and flee to Christ for salvation. Build upon Him, the Rock of Ages, and you are safe for eternity: on any other foundation, there is certain ruin.

B. GILLETTE.

A WORD IN SEASON.

Isaiah 1, 4.—“*The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.*”

WHATEVER reference the prophet may have to the discharge of his ministry in the first instance, a greater than Isaiah is here. The subject of the prophecy has unquestionable reference to the Messiah, and the redemption of the world from condemnation and eternal woe. The text may be considered as a proclamation of comfort to those who were captives to the law of God, and who sigh for deliverance from the penalty which they have incurred. To them is the word in season to be spoken, and it has its fulfilment in the well-known and gracious words of our blessed Lord when He says,—“Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I. Who are the weary? The answer to this question will invest the subject with interest to all included in the description. It is the condemned that feels the value of royal forgiveness. It is the sick that estimates health at its true and essential worth. Offer medicine to the whole and the gift is spurned. It is the hungry that longs for food—the wretched that sighs for relief—the weary that pants for rest.

It is a descriptive and comprehensive character. It includes the several classes whom the Redeemer came to relieve. The mourner whom He comforts; the broken-hearted whom He heals; the captive whom He redeems; the prisoner whose debts He discharges, and whose prison doors He opens. Every penitent—every mourner—every one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, is comprehended in the term before us. While, however, all have access to Him who has the tongue of the learned, they only

who feel their spiritual condition will appreciate the gracious words which He addresses to the children of men.

Characters are best delineated by contrast. Many learned men have strained and taxed their minds to ascertain upon scientific principles the essential nature of *light*; some have defined it as composed of luminous particles of certain forms and colour; and others as the mere reflection from some vast body, whose rays fall upon the natural eye. After all, the truth is, that it is best known by its opposite, *darkness*; and beyond this little is ascertained respecting it. It is so morally. We may see the character of the weary soul by contrasting it with the opposite character as described in the Word of God. Sinners are said *to be at ease* in Zion; neither feeling their condition, nor concerned for the consequences. Sin within and around them disturbs them not. They are said to be *asleep*; in a state of insensibility and delusion; dreaming of security on the verge of destruction. If they attend to the external forms of religion it is with a drowsy and thoughtless mind. They are said to be *whole*; though blind they think they see; though deaf they think they hear; though filled with disease in all the powers and faculties of the soul, they think themselves perfectly sound. They are said to be *slaves*; led captive by the devil at his will, yet they boast that they were never in bondage to any man. The strong man keepeth his goods in peace, led willingly by lusts that war against the soul. And they are said to be *dead*; dead in trespasses and sin. This completes the melancholy catalogue of their miserable condition. It is a finished picture of moral wretchedness. In bold contrast with this class of mankind are all those comprehended in the character of the weary. They are described as men that labour and are heavy laden. A sense of guilt and unworthiness often weighs down their spirits and makes them sigh for deliverance. They are poor in spirit and emptied of self. They hunger and thirst after righteousness, and would be thankful for the crumbs

that fall from the table of mercy. They are oppressed by the power of remaining sin, and tremble under a view of their depravity and corruption. They are often tempted to despair, and fear they shall at last be condemned with the wicked. Such are some of the feelings of the awakened soul. It is weary of the world, of its vanities and follies. It pants for God, and like St. Paul the trembling sinner exclaims,—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death !” Is such a deliverer to be found? There is *one*, an interpreter, one among the thousand who has the tongue of the learned, and can speak a word in season to him that is weary.

II. Let us proceed to notice His qualification for His work. The weary are His peculiar charge. It was said in spirit of derision that He was the friend of publicans and sinners ; but He justified Himself against the reproach. And nothing can be more plain than the unlimited offer of mercy to sinners of every name who will come to Him for life. He says,—Unto you, O man, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money ; come ye, buy and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

But while all are called, they only who feel their burdens will apply for relief. And hence they are addressed in a very particular manner. The broken-hearted alone will apply to the Great Physician. The captive alone welcomes the voice of the Deliverer. The weary spirit alone will value the rest which the Saviour promises. He therefore who has the tongue of the learned, into whose lips grace was poured, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, addresses them in a more particular manner. When He began His ministry by the sermon on the mount, He pronounced his blessing on the poor in spirit—the mourner—the meek—the merciful—the peaceful and the persecuted, thereby intimating that the humble and

contrite, such as the world disdains, were His peculiar charge. This was carrying out the prediction in the text. While He could address the doctors of His day, even at the age of twelve years, and could silence the cavils of the greatest of the nation. He had the tongue of the learned that He might speak a word in season to the weary and down-cast, the children of penitence and godly sorrow.

The language of the text—the tongue of the weary, is a phrase that denotes His pre-eminent qualification for His work. It is natural to suppose, that a learned man, skilled in his profession, whether it be of the law, or of medicine, or of theology, is the best competent to explain the case submitted to his attention. This is the leading idea suggested by the representation of the prophet. And there are, among a vast number which we cannot specify, *four* things which illustrate the qualification here affirmed.

1. *The constitution of His personal nature. He is the true God.* So the scriptures declare Him to be. There is no doctrine more clearly stated by the sacred writers, than that of the essential deity of the Son of God. This gives Him an infinite pre-eminence over all human preceptors. The wisest practitioners may mistake on a point of law to the discomfiture of his client, and the loss of his suit. The most skilful physician may be deceived by the symptoms of the patient, and err in his treatment. The most learned minister of the gospel, may be unable to solve every difficulty which perplexes the anxious inquirer, but He who knows all things, and in whom dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, can make no mistake, or be liable to err in the treatment of His patients.

Moreover. *He is truly man.* This qualifies Him to sympathize with the children of sorrow. He knows by experience what it is to be weary. It is said of Him that though without sin, He was tempted in all points like as we are. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, He thus drank of the cup of affliction through all His

public life. He was weary with His journey, and sat down upon Jacob's well. He was without a home of His own providing, and was sustained by the hand of friendship. He well knew the pangs of desertion ; and at last died a cruel death for man's salvation. Thus did He learn by experience how to speak a word in season to the weary.

2. Qualified by *the compassion of His heart*, every woe He saw affected His spirit. The miracles He wrought were not for display ; they were no less indicative of His benevolence than of His power. He commissioned His prophets to speak consolation to the afflicted, before His incarnation. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." He was Himself anointed to preach good tidings. He delighted to make the widow's heart sing for joy. Pity sprung up in His breast as water in its native fountain.

"His heart was made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love."

3. Qualified by *His consummate wisdom*, He knows not only *what* to speak, and *when* to speak, but *how* to speak. Much depends on the manner in which a word is spoken, as to its effect. The best advice given in a scolding and angry tone will seldom do any good. Reproof, however seasonable and necessary, if administered in a wrong spirit will irritate rather than convince. Our blessed Lord, therefore spoke with gentleness. While He rebuked His enemies with all fidelity, He addressed the weary with all kindness and meekness. So great was His tenderness of manner, combined with the eloquence of His address, that the people wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. Thus was fulfilled the prediction—"Behold my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be extolled and exalted, and be very high."

4. Finally. He was *qualified by the power* with which He could make the word effectual. In this respect He differed from the apostles. They could pronounce but could not command the blessing. The same now. We can

only speak to the outward ear, but the Saviour always spake with power. He could reach the heart, and cause the prince of darkness to quit possession. When He spake the word, devils fled before Him. The Roman guards fall to the ground at the sound of His voice. And now, when the weary come to His house and ordinances, He speaks to them in accents of mercy and love. And with respect to the thoughtless and hard hearted. He takes away the heart of stone, and gives them a heart of flesh.

To conclude. Let us be thankful if we feel weary of sin. We are just then in a right frame of mind to receive the words of Christ. It is better to endure sharp convictions for a season, than to die and suffer eternal torment for ever. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He will save you.

W. BARLASS.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH ENFORCED.

Mark i., xv.—“*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel.*”

THESE are the words of our blessed Lord, uttered at the commencement of His ministry. John the Baptist had delivered the same exhortation, when ushering in the Messiah, and preparing His way before Him,—“Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The period of the abolition of the Jewish services and of the Mosaic ritual had arrived, the new dispensation, called sometimes the kingdom of heaven, and sometimes the kingdom of God, was at hand, and it behoved all classes, whether of the seed of Abraham or of Gentile extraction, to renounce their systems of religion and embrace the Gospel, the glad tidings of mercy and love which the Divine Prophet had come to announce and intro-

duce as the religion of the world, at once safe to man and fraught with glory to God.

Than how a fallen and sinful creature may recover his standing and escape from the penal consequences of his apostasy and guilt, no question can be of greater importance. For the Sovereign and Judge of the earth to receive rebels into favour without some adequate expression of the purity of His nature and the integrity of His law, reason itself pronounces to be impossible. But reason cannot devise a scheme by which He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity can admit the guilty and polluted into His presence, or suffer the wicked to stand before Him. No oblations however costly, no sacrifices however great, can be worthy of the majesty of the Most High, who delighteth not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. But what the most sagacious human intellect is unable to discover our blessed Saviour has clearly revealed. "The world by wisdom knew not God"; it neither knew His nature nor demands; it was alike ignorant of what He is, and how He is to be approached. The Scriptures alone have manifested Him to the world, and told every child of man, wherever christianity has come or shall come, that his plain business and duty is, to "repent and believe the gospel," as the only way to be saved.

There are two things we have to do, these are to repent and believe. May the blessing of God accompany the endeavour to explain and enforce them!

The *first* thing enforced is *repentance*. Whatever repentance is, it is intended by the Great Author of our being to reclaim transgressors from the ways of sin. It is expressly revealed as necessary to salvation. He who cannot err, and who knoweth all things hath solemnly said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." This doctrine was likewise urged by the forerunner of our Lord, as the first step to the participation of that gospel which was to be preached to all nations for the obedience of faith. When

the Saviour called unto Him the *twelve*, and began to send them forth two and two, "they went out and preached that man should repent." In like manner the *seventy* whom He sent before Him into every place whither He Himself intended to come, preached the same doctrine, announcing the approach of the kingdom of heaven; and such was the effect of their ministry, that the very devils were subject unto them through the name of their Divine Master.

With evidence so conclusive of the indispensable necessity of repentance, it is of the first importance, that we should most attentively inquire into its nature. And here we would be clearly understood to affirm, that no external action, no words of confession however proper, no abandonment even of those sins which were previously cherished, will of themselves constitute repentance that needeth not to be repented of. We should be careful not to judge the motives and objects of the man who renounces a course of vice and enters on one of sobriety and virtue. God alone is the searcher of the heart. But we must, notwithstanding bear in mind, that there may be the acknowledgement of having sinned, where there is no inward and in-wrought contrition in the soul; and that other motives than those of detestation of sin, and love to God, may force a man to change his course of life. No repentance is genuine and scriptural, that does not arise from a deep sense of guilt, a hatred of sin as the abominable thing that God hates, and unaffected sorrow of heart at its having been committed against so gracious a God, and so good a Father.

Such a change of mind will lead to a change of life. That change will be more or less striking and observable, according to the previous character and habits of the penitent. The unblameably moral and virtuous, the circumspect and the well conducted, will not appear so obviously renewed, as the man who is translated from the darkness of vice and a course of outward wickedness. But all need repentance, and all who truly repent bring forth

fruits meet for repentance. In every person who becomes the subject of this grace, *the mind is changed*, and that change will be productive of a life according to godliness. It is a salutary and happy alteration in the heart and temper. It begins in our thoughts and purposes, and is developed in our life and conduct.

There is no class of men to whom this great change is unnecessary, nor is there one single being upon whom it is not enforced. It tells the *thief* "let him that stole, steal no more." It tells the *indolent* to "labour, working with his hands the things which are good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." It teaches the *intemperate* not only to avoid being "drunk with wine, wherein is excess," but to be "filled with the Spirit of God." It commands the *irascible* and *angry* to "put away from them all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking," and to be "peaceable, gentle, and easily entreated." It enjoins the *vindictive*, the *unforgiving*, and the *impatient*, to bear insults rather than to avenge them, and to forgive one another as God for Christ's sake forgiveth the penitent. It demands that the *proud man* shall not only renounce his pride and vain glory, but "condescend to men of low estate." In a word, it teaches every man to cast away from him all his transgressions, to seek the regeneration of his nature by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to abound in "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory of God the Father."

Such is repentance : such the doctrine with which Christ commenced His ministry, and such the frame of mind which admission into the kingdom of heaven requires. We must repent or perish.

The *second* thing enforced by our Lord is *faith*. We are not only to repent, but we are to *believe the gospel*. These two articles may be considered as including the whole duty and experience of a Christian. Repentance may be regarded as the state of heart which we owe to God as our

Governor, and faith as that exercise of the mind which embraces the doctrines and salvation wrought by Christ in the gospel. The former refers to the past, the latter to the present and the future. In similar language St. Paul defines his own ministry, as "testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

But what is it to "believe the gospel?" It is more than the assent of the understanding to its contents, for "the devils believe and tremble." A man may say, "Lord, Lord," or "Hail Master," for Judas did this, and not believe to the saving of the soul. Faith is neither the offspring of flattery, nor of fear, nor of selfishness. It is that firm confidence, that unfeigned homage and belief of the heart which receives with unfeigned reverence, and honors as divine, whatever the sacred Scriptures teach as the revealed truth of God: and more particularly, all things relating to the Saviour; the predictions of prophets, His wonderful incarnation, His Deity and humanity, His office as Mediator, His doctrines and miracles, His death as a sacrifice for sin, His resurrection, ascension, intercession, and return to judge the world in righteousness. Moreover it includes a full conviction of our need of Christ, of His suitableness and all-sufficiency, of His willingness to save us from sin and misery, and a simple reliance on His atoning death for all the purposes of eternal life.

This is to believe the gospel. He who thus embraces it, has that "faith which purifieth the heart," which "worketh by love," and which "overcometh the world." This is the faith which the patriarchs possessed, and by which they "obtained the promises, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." This is the faith through which we are kept by the power of God unto salvation.

This is the faith by which we walk, by which we stand, by which we are justified, and by which we endure as seeing Him who is invisible. In a word, this is the especial fruit of the Spirit which unites us to Him, in whom we have righteousness and strength, and through whom we receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

These, then, are the two great comprehensive articles of christian doctrine which our Lord laid down at the beginning of His ministry. The Jews and the Gentiles had both gone wrong, and they must retrace their steps and begin anew. The former had sunk into mere ritualism, and made the word of God of none effect by their traditions. The latter in their ignorance had worshipped idols, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things." Both the one and the other were therefore in error, and professing themselves to be wise had become fools. They are therefore condemned, and the only way of escape is to repent and believe the Gospel.

To the necessity of both these graces of the Holy Spirit the sacred volume bears unequivocal testimony. Neither the one or the other may be dispensed with on pain of eternal destruction. The times of heathen ignorance had much and long experience of the divine forbearance, but "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Heaven and earth must pass away; the distinctions between good and evil, light and darkness, bitter and sweet, must be abolished; the whole scheme and order of creation must be overturned before it can be possible for an impenitent man to enter the kingdom of God.

The same fact is true with respect to that evangelical faith which we are commanded to exercise. If the interests of pure religion have suffered from the conduct of those who

represent Christianity as a matter of speculation, and not of practice ; much also has it suffered from the delusion that salvation is attainable only by works of human righteousness. This is a fearful mistake. It is to put asunder what God has joined together. It is to place holiness, not in conjunction with faith as it should be, but in opposition to it. It is also in direct opposition to the express tenor of our Lord's memorable words,—“ He that believeth on Him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.” Happy are they who know whom they have believed ! Among their blessed number may we all be found !

ANDREW STEVENSON.

CONFESSION AND PRAYER.

Luke xv. 19.—“ *And am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants.*”

FOR the purpose of understanding the spiritual design and application of a parable it is necessary to bear in mind the occasion on which it was spoken, and the principal characters to whom it was originally addressed. The most interesting parable of the prodigal son was delivered by our Lord as a stern rebuke to the Scribes and Pharisees who had murmured at His conduct, and reproched Him for “receiving sinners and eating with them.” Describing in a striking and in an affecting allegory the departure of a sinner from God, by the departure of a younger son from

his father's house and home, and its awful train of consequences. He exhibits the cordial reception which the youth receives on his return to his father in filial contrition and full confession of his misconduct. In this feature of the parable, our Lord conveys a strong and merited reproof to those pretenders to a piety they never felt, by contrasting the gracious conduct of Almighty God with their uncharitable disposition both towards publicans and sinners and Himself. The application, however, is of much wider extent, and contains some of the great principles of the gospel in which we are all personally interested.

The portion of the parable selected for our present consideration, contains two sentiments which the prodigal resolved to utter when he should gain his home, and come within the reach of his father's ear. The first is the language of *confession*, and the second is that of *prayer*. The verse is closely connected with the preceding one—"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The text puts before us

First: the prodigal's frank and ingenious confession. And here we wish it to be distinctly borne in mind, that the acknowledgment of his unworthiness is an exact description of the conviction and feeling of every sinner on his return to God. It is the one frame of mind that always accompanies the conversion of a sinner. It is not merely a duty which he is sensible he ought to perform; it is the natural utterance of godly sorrow. Before the wretched youth had "come to himself," while yet as one without reason, though sorely destitute and troubled, he went and joined himself to a citizen of the country where he was, and engaged himself in a low and discreditable occupation; but now he is come to his right mind, he is fain to disburden his conscience. When an awakened sinner comes to God, he comes with grief in his spirit and confession

on his lips saying, "I have sinned, what shall I do to be saved?"—

But all confession is not genuine. There are numerous instances on record in the pages of Scripture to the contrary. Pharoah said to Moses—"I have sinned; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." And Saul said the same to Samuel—"I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word." And even Judas acknowledged his guilt, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

Wherein lies the difference between these confessions and that of the prodigal? It consists in this, that they were made to man, and not to God. The pride of their hearts kept them from humbling themselves before Him. They did not acknowledge their sin to Him against whom they had sinned. But the repenting prodigal goes directly to his father—to God himself, and tells Him all. It was this that cut him to his heart, that he had rebelled against so kind, so tender a Father. It was a confession of sin with a sense of its evil and wickedness, and that it had made him too base to be accounted one of the family of so good and generous a parent. "I am no more worthy to be called thy son," were his words of humiliation and penitence. Thus, in the language of an old divine, "he puts himself in the hands of justice before he casts himself upon mercy and grace."

It is of great importance to attend to this distinction. There may be terror in the conscience where there is no tenderness; fear where there is no self-abasement; and a formal confession with the tongue to man, where there is no humbling of the heart before God. To confess sin because it concerns ourselves, is one thing, to abhor and forsake it because it is offensive to God, is another. The prodigal knew and felt he had been a great cause of grief to his father, and this made him ashamed to own himself a son. This sense of unworthiness is always an accompaniment of that godly sorrow which worked

repentance unto life. Thus Esra mourned and said, "O God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee!" So Daniel, "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face." This is the disposition that God hath said, will be in true penitents: that thou mayest be confounded, and never open thy mouth," that is, in thine own justification, "because of thy shame." "Were they at all ashamed when they committed abomination?" saith the Lord of Judah. "Nay they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." But when they repented and returned, they smote upon their thigh and were ashamed, yea, even confounded."

Secondly : Observe the prayer. The prodigal acknowledges that he had forfeited the privilege of a child, both as to affection and provision; and if he might be but a servant in his father's house, he would be satisfied as having more than his desert. "Make me as one of thy hired servants."

Three things are included in this request.

1. It shews his desire to be *reconciled* to his father. And in this he is the representative of all true converts. Absalom was not so anxious to see the king's face, as the returning sinner is to see the face of God. When Saul was terrified, he must have music to soothe and calm his troubled spirit. The harp of the son of Jesse is put in requisition to give him relief. And at a later period of his life when the affairs of his kingdom were desperate, he must apply to the witch of Endor to tell him his fate and the issue of the conflict in which he was about to engage. Not a word did he utter, nor one syllable of desire did he express, for the mercy and favour of God. In striking contrast with this is the feeling and spirit of David. When he had grievously sinned and his conscience smote him, all his concern was for peace with God against whom he had done evil, and whose displeasure he had incurred. "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit." And this was the prayer

of the Jews—"Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved."

Feelings like these have ever been the effect of grace in the heart. Naturally, man is alienated from God, and rather desires Him to depart, than prays for His presence and favour. A sense of guilt makes us wish to shun the interview, as did Adam when he vainly sought to hide himself among the trees of the garden. But to the penitent the case is completely reversed. His language is, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God." He esteems His favour as life, and His loving kindness to be better than life. And when the soul has lost the sensible enjoyment of the smile of God, its sorrow is great. It is then the utterance of unfeigned distress is heard—"O that I knew where I could find Him!" "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness!"

2. The repenting sinner will be glad of peace with God *on any terms*. If the prodigal might but be received by his Father, he would be content to be in the meanest capacity. He never thought of the fatted calf, or the best robe, or of the ring on his hand, or shoes on his feet. Oh! let me return to thy dear abode, and I shall not covet the chief room, or the highest seat. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. David would be happy to be a doorkeeper in the house of his God. The least grace is infinitely precious. It is connected with salvation, and makes us the heirs of promise. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. When our hearts are truly humbled, when the scales of ignorance and self-righteousness and sin have fallen from our eyes, when we are brought to feel our destitute and lost condition as sinners, then like Saul of Tarsus, trembling and astonished, we shall anxiously ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to

do?" We shall be willing to submit to any thing which the blessed God shall require, however hard the service. To be in a state of grace, and to live in communion with Him, like the apostle of the Gentiles, we shall value as unspeakably better than the highest position on earth with the curse of unregeneracy and impenitence in our heart. Hear the words of one who had made no mean sacrifices for the sake of Him whom he loved. "What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He looked upon himself as a gainer by surrendering all his privileges as a Jew, and all his hopes as a Pharisee, that he might win Christ. And so, when a sinner is coming home to God, it satisfies him, though it be with poverty, loss of friends, of rank, and worldly honours. The smile of his heavenly Father outweighs them all. He had rather live one day in His presence, though in an abject condition, than in the possession of the world's most splendid gifts at a distance from Him.

3. The prayer of the prodigal evinces *the humility of a contrite spirit*. It seems hardly possible to conceive of a deeper sense of unworthiness and self-abasement, then he discovers. He renounces all claim to the relation of a son; to be a servant is the highest honour to which he aspires. And that not even as a servant born in the house, but as one *hired* by the day, or week, that could be discharged at the master's pleasure. Perhaps he mentions this particular kind or class of servants in allusion to his own position as the hired servant of the citizen whose swine he fed. But be this as it may, it shews the meekness and lowliness of his heart, and in this he is a type of all who come to God. Grace, says an old writer, is a self-emptying thing, by which a man seeth God and himself with other eyes than formerly. Paul was alive without the law, but when its purity and strictness came home in a flood of light and power to his conscience, he saw himself the chief of sinners. The nearer

a man comes to God, the more he sees of his own defiled and sinful state. "Woe is me," saith the prophet, "I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips." How did he make this discovery? He tells us—"for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

Let us learn from this subject,

1. The *woeful folly* and consequences of sin. The distress and misery to which the infatuated youth in this parable was reduced, are just such as every wanderer from God will sooner or later most certainly experience: the abandoned sinner, in whatever way he indulges the desires of his depraved heart, finds in the course of time his resources fail; and they whom he had caressed will be among the first to reproach him for his extravagance and folly. Not one of his former companions came with a morsel of bread to his relief.

2. Let those who have wandered from God learn to *retrace their steps*. Arise O prodigal, and go to thy father. He will welcome thee home. He waits to be gracious. He will come to meet thee with arms and lips of mercy.

JOHN HICKERSON.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF PARDON.

Romans iv. 7, 8.—"*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*"

THESE words are quoted by the apostle from the thirty-second Psalm, and are introduced in the text to shew the freeness of the salvation which the gospel reveals. This

great and fundamental principle of religion, the apostle illustrates to shew that it was not *new*, but as in the case of Abraham, was substantially the doctrine of patriarchs and prophets. Having referred to the distinguished founder of the Jewish nation, called in Scripture the father of the faithful and the friend of God, St. Paul proceeds to mention the views and sentiments of David as expressing the same cardinal truth. To support the doctrine in question he says—"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." This is as much as to say—"Most happy is the condition of the person on whom the Lord doth not charge sin, but treats as pardoned and righteous." This is the doctrine which the text brings before us; and the blessedness of the justified person is here set forth under three images. He is pardoned—his sin is covered—and he is perfectly free from all charge of iniquity. Let us speak of these individually, in the order in which the texts presents them to our notice. They are points of infinite moment to us all.

I. The first part of blessedness consists in the *pardon of sin*.

There is no difficulty in understanding this act of Sovereign goodness. To forgive is to pardon, to remove the guilt of sin, and to withhold the punishment which may be justly inflicted on the offender.

This is the first step in the personal salvation of man. He is under sentence of law, and that sentence is capital—it consigns to death eternal the impenitent and unpardoned. But the revocation of the sentence sets the culprit free, and there is no condemnation impending over him.

This forgiveness is a pure doctrine of Revelation, and cannot be learnt from any other source. However striking the proclamations of nature with respect to the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, they do not convey hope to the bosom of the guilty. The most learned and profound writers and philosophers, have never been able to

deduce from their investigations of the field of creation a single fragment of information, relative to the enquiry—"What must I do to be saved?"—or, will the Almighty forgive my sins? Not a solitary ray illuminates the midnight of the convinced spirit in any page of the thousands of volumes which have been published to the world, save what has been derived from the source of all information—the word of God.

This is the extremity in which the gospel meets the desponding sinner, and opens before him the prospect of eternal life. This doctrine, first announced by Jehovah himself, and illustrated by the institution of sacrifices, became in succeeding ages a prominent element in the announcements of the inspired writers, who united in reiterating the Divine proclamation—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin."

To open a way for the exercise of mercy, was the great object of the Saviour's mission. It was for this that He was born, taught, suffered, and died. The blood of bulls and goats, could not take away sin. This, an apostle says, was impossible. In the reason of things there could be no proportion between the sacrifice of a beast, and the demerit of an intelligent agent—between the agonies of an irrational creature, and that punishment which the sinner deserves from the hand of his offended judge. It is therefore said with all possible clearness, that "we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, cleanseth from all sins. Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

These passages need no comment; their meaning is plain to every understanding. The truth they convey is just this—the supreme Governor of the world accepts the death of his Son as the propitiation or sacrifice on which He can

consistently bestow mercy on the sinful, who believe in Christ, and forsake their iniquities.

II. But the apostle takes us up a second step in this scale of blessedness. Referring to the Psalm, he says—"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are *covered*."

The language is remarkable. It intimates that sin in itself is odious and loathsome in the sight of God; and that in order to appear in His presence, a covering must be thrown over his offences, so that they may, as it were, be hid from the eye of Him who cannot behold iniquity. We know that this is in reality impossible, since the eye of Omniscience can see through every guise however thick. But the language is figurative, and conveys the idea that the blessed God will not look upon the sin that He has pardoned.

This covering is the righteousness of Christ. By His death, one veil, the veil of ignorance and darkness which separated us from God was taken away. But by the obedience of the Saviour, and His death on the cross, another veil was thrown over us: a veil to hide our guilt from the justice of the law, and to shelter us from the wrath to come.

This is a wonderful thing. That our heavenly Father, all pure and holy as He is, should provide for His sinful creatures a covering to hide their deformity, is truly an instance of love. To use the figure of the prophet Isaiah—the Lord casts the sins of His people behind His back, as one refusing to see them any more; or that of the prophet Micah—they are cast into the depths of the sea. Wrath is removed, the law condemns no more, and the mercy of God now streams upon the pardoned with no judicial obstacle to obstruct its flow. It is this transference from wrath to favour, which is meant by the "covering of sin," or as it is commonly expressed in theological phrase, "the imputation of righteousness." To shew the perfection

of this act of grace, the sacred penmen by the Spirit of inspiration, used the strongest terms. Thus, in addition to those we have just quoted, we read—"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And beneath the veil of mercy thus cast over our deformities and sins, a work of grace is carried on by the power of the Spirit of Christ, which gradually transforms our inner nature from impurity to holiness, till we are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

III. The non-imputation of sin is the third step in the scale of the Christian's privilege and happiness. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

To impute sin means, to charge us as guilty, and to treat us accordingly. To the unbelieving and impenitent, we know, that at the day of judgment this will assuredly be done. However long ago committed they will be brought against them, and condemnation will follow the conviction. Meanwhile it is the blessedness of the christian to know that to him the Lord will not impute sin—will not reckon or account as guilty. That which will adorn the believer at the day of judgment is the righteousness of Christ which is to all and upon all them that believe. And upon the sufficiency and merits of this righteousness the christian will stand accepted, and receive the joyful salutation,—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Then his blessedness will be complete, without diminution and without end.

From this threefold view of a state of pardon it is abundantly evident that forgiveness cannot be *gradually* bestowed. There is a school of theologians which teaches that it is a blessing received by slow degrees—that is, partly in baptism, partly at confirmation, partly at the Lord's Supper, and partly at liturgical or priestly con-

fessions. One of this class of writers has compared the progress of pardon to the successive flow of advancing waves upon the sea shores, where, although each wave continually retires after its first advance, yet upon the whole, the flood makes continual progress till it has risen to its wonted mark. And this delusion is by no means confined to High Church teaching, or what is called the system of Puseyism. There are many, very many, who although they repudiate the notion of being saved for their own good works, secretly cherish the persuasion, that by a long and careful attention to the public institutions of religion, they shall gradually wear away their guilt, and attain eternal life. But there is nothing in the Scriptures that justifies this view of the case. The blessedness pronounced, is not upon the man who is gradually acquiring pardon, but who is pardoned, and who is as free from liability to offended justice as if he had never sinned. Should such a person return to sin, and die in impenitence, he would doubtless be condemned. But this we hold to be a case that cannot occur ; for as the omniscient eye of God knoweth all things, He can hardly be supposed to forgive a man whom He foresees will turn again to sin. "The gifts and callings of God are without repentance. The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." We may not have the evidence or witness within us that we are free from condemnation, but the rescinding of the sentence is a positive act on the part of the blessed God, and is perfect. We cannot be partly accepted and partly condemned ; partly guilty and partly forgiven ; if we have remission, it is the remission of sins that are past ; if we are justified at all, we are justified freely from all things. Blessed now and blessed for ever is that person however poor, despised, and afflicted, "whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sin is covered."

WILLIAM MORGAN.

WISDOM'S INVITATION.

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Proverbs ix. 5.—“*Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*”

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THE ministers of the gospel are to travel all the length and breadth of Divine Revelation, that they may bring forth to their hearers things new and old. No portion of the sacred field is to be overlooked ; the whole is to be explored and exhibited as the word of God. Fidelity to Him who has accounted them faithful, and sent them to work in His vineyard, requires that nothing be omitted which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Compassion to erring and wandering souls requires it: for they need line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, that they may be reclaimed from the dark and dangerous paths of sin. And woe to those unfaithful shepherds who shall shrink from the discharge of their duty, for the sake of worldly honour or gain ! “Do I seek to please men ?” asks the Apostle. And he answers his own question—“if I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ:” which is to say, that if he made the approbation of his hearers the standard of the gospel, he should forfeit all claim to be regarded as the minister of Christ.

Still there is one part of the minister's work, which He will delight to discharge, above all others. It is that of putting before His flock the provisions of mercy and love which Christ, who is Divine Wisdom, has mingled for the hungry and thirsty soul. To gather sinners into the gospel fold, and to labour to swell the number of the Redeemer's

followers, is the undivided aim of every one who would make full proof of his ministry; and to be successful in this branch of pastoral duty, is to his mind a source of the purest joy.

“We beseech men to be reconciled to God;” “we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God,” are the memorable words of St. Paul, when speaking of his own object and aim. We join him at this time in the entreaty. We come to you in the spirit and attitude of suppliants—not for ourselves, but for you. We have to present you with the invitation of Divine wisdom, and to urge you to come and partake of the feast of salvation which Heavenly love has prepared for a starving world.

I. We shall endeavour to set the *invitation* before you, that there may be no excuse for refusing it.

The person who invites you is the Son of God: so He is designated in the Scriptures. We often find Him in this character—the wisdom of God and the power of God. St. Paul says, that He is made unto us *wisdom*. In the Proverbs He is represented under this significant title; and the description is sustained by all His personal excellencies as displayed when He sojourned on earth. “In Him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”—“the fulness of the Godhead bodily, dwelt in Him.” He was from everlasting with God: and “whoso findeth Him, findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” This is He who hath spread the banquet, who hath sent forth His servants and bidden His guests, and whose lips have said—“Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”

Of this generous invitation we remark,

1. That its acceptance is open to every human being on the face of the earth. The great Founder of this feast, excludes none who are seriously concerned to partake of its dainties. The God of the Gospel is no respecter of persons. In the covenant of grace, there is neither Jew nor

Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. To the rich and to the poor, to the mighty and the mean, to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh, the overtures of mercy are made, as equally suitable and equally free. However low you may have sunk in the scale of moral being; though you should be so degraded as to wonder that the patience and long suffering of God should have borne with you to this hour; though religiously you should be poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind, the outcast of the field, or the tenant of the hedge, yet the invitation of boundless benevolence is—"Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine I have mingled." "Whosoever will, let him come." All things are now ready, and yet there is room.

2. This invitation is urged upon you with affectionate earnestness.

In the well known parable of the great supper, spoken by our Lord, the ministers of the gospel, under the character of the servants of the Master of the feast, are commanded to compel you to come. That such a precept should have ever been perverted into a plea for persecution, as has been done by the papal church, may excite surprise at their boldness, and pity for their folly. But how are men to be compelled? Not by coercion or legal enactments—not by bribery or the civil power—but by the mercies of God, and the gentleness of Christ. We are to urge upon you the love that brought the Redeemer into the world—and the cordial welcome He will give to all who will come. And if these should fail, we are commanded to preach the terrors of the Lord, and pourtray the dreadful alternative, that you must come or perish.

3. There is such a character in the invitations of the gospel, as will leave you wholly inexcusable if you reject them. It is of no consequence what the excuses are which you may urge, they are utterly insufficient and inadmissible. There are some who refuse, because to comply would involve

a measure of self-denial which they are not prepared to exercise. It requires the performance of duties they hate, and to forsake bosom sins they love. Others refuse on the plea of engagements, lawful in themselves, but which they allow to intervene between their duty to God, and the salvation of the soul. It was thus with some of whom we read in the parable. Their speculations and worldliness, and even their domestic relationship were pleaded as excuses for keeping from the feast. But He who invites you to eat His bread and drink His wine, will accept of none of these grounds of refusal. To come to Christ, to give God your heart, to forsake the foolish and live, and go in the way of understanding, impose no undue restraint upon the discharge of secular duties. It is not necessary that you should become idlers and recluses in order to be truly religious. We are to abide with God in our calling, and be diligent in business while we are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

II. Such is the invitation. What are the inducements to its acceptance?

Let me ask you one question—What would be an inducement to you to accept an invitation to any other feast?

One would be the *rank* of the person that invites you to his table. This would have a considerable influence in disposing you to embrace it. If a prince were to request your company at an entertainment in his palace, you would not decline the honour if it were in your power to accept it. To sit at meat with the great and the mighty, would be esteemed a distinction not to be slighted. Now *who* invites you to the feast of fat things in the gospel? It is "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." But ah! how few are ready to welcome the message He sends to bid you come! Hark! "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come out to him and sup with him, and he with me." How strange, that a human being with a soul to be

saved or lost, should keep such a visitor waiting at his door for a moment !

2. Another inducement would be the *guests* whom you would meet at the feast. And who are they? A mixed company truly. Persons of every clime and condition. The rich and the poor meet together there. The scholar and the unlearned in this world's wisdom are there. The sons of toil, and the children of want, are there. Yet the company is select. It is composed of the wise and the good of every name: all are on a level at the feast of salvation. All are renewed in the spirit of their minds—all are adorned with the white robe of the Redeemer's purity—all speak the language of Canaan—all have the mark of the Lamb in their foreheads—all are justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. They are all one in Christ: and will reign with Him for ever and ever. With such a company you need not blush to be associated at a feast.

3. The *occasion* of the entertainment would also be a point of interest with you. There are some festive entertainments holden to celebrate occurrences and events which are unworthy of commemoration,—events which it were well to forget. But the case is otherwise with the feast to which you are invited. It is prepared—not for the amusement of a day, or the gratification of the senses and appetites for an hour—it is to supply you with immortal food, and to feed you with the meat that endureth unto everlasting life. Hence the provisions of the gospel are designated as bread from heaven, as living bread: and that whosoever shall eat it, will live for ever in the kingdom of God. Who can refuse to partake of food prepared, and offered freely, which shall nourish the soul unto eternal life?

And *finally*. The consequences that may result from a refusal of the invitation, would also weigh with you in deciding the question. You may feel that you would incur the displeasure of a friend, or appear ungrateful to a bene-

factor who has served you. A sense of obligation would thus induce you to accept the proffered favour. But what are these, or any other considerations, compared with the case before us? You fear to displease a fellow creature who has done you service, or on whom you feel some dependence, yet you dare to risk the favour of God, and treat His offers of mercy with neglect! Once more you are asked to come—to come from bondage to liberty—from danger to safety—from hunger to fulness—from the husks of the world to the dainties of heaven. Will you come? Accept and live; refuse and die! There is no escape to those who neglect this great salvation.

J. R. HIBBARD.

DEATH ABOLISHED AND LIFE SECURED.

2 Timothy i, 10—"——— our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

DEATH is one of the most awful subjects—perhaps the most awful subject—on which the thoughts of man can be employed. It is represented as the king of terrors—as an enemy—as the destroyer of our race. It is a formidable foe to contend against; and one that is sure to gain a temporary conquest in every case. But its destiny is to be subdued. The millions whom it sweeps away from our globe shall live again, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, when parents, children, and brethren are removed,

and buried out of our sight, how reviving are the discoveries which the gospel unfolds ! Here the veil, which from the commencement of time has concealed the future, is drawn aside, and what was before obscure is now made manifest by the appearing of Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. This is the subject for our present meditation.

The *foe*, the *abolition*, and the *life* revealed are the three particulars which the text brings before us.

I. The enemy to be destroyed,—Death.

If we single out a case of death in its least terrific form we shall see enough to make us sensible of its power. An irrational animal does not die without giving evidence of the violence done to nature by the fatal blow. Life is sweet to every animated being ; the lowest creatures in the scale of existence that may be thought to have the least possible enjoyment of life cling to it instinctively, and feel the greatest terror at the prospect of its loss. Even a life of pain is preferred to annihilation. Yet death is making continual havoc in every part of the brute and insect creation, and extinguishing the vital spark which, as far as we know, sheds the only feeble ray allotted to the irrational tribes of the world.

Yet it were but an ignoble victory, had death no higher object of ambition than the beasts which perish. This great adversary to life ascends to the highest species of beings next to the angels of God, and wages war with man who bears the image of the Deity. Seizing on his prey he wastes it by the slowness of disease, or strikes it with a deadly blow ; now laying hold on smiling infancy, now casting at his feet decrepid old age ; at one time depopulating a country by a cruel war, at another by gaunt famine or the stalking pestilence, which no power of man can arrest.

But these are only the visible evils of death ; there are those more dreadful still which fall not under the observa-

tion of the human eye. There is a second death. The dissolution of the body is the smallest part of the consequences of the fatal arrow ; the material frame crumbles into dust, but the immortal spirit of the unpardoned and impenitent, naked, defenceless, guilty, ruined, is conveyed as a prisoner to the tribunal of the Judge eternal. It there receives its sentence, and is hurried to the abodes of despair covered with shame, and consigned to weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, without an eye to pity, or a hand to relieve.

II. Such is the foe, and such his power. Let us turn to the *abolition* which the Saviour has effected. He hath abolished death—destroyed it, as the word is sometimes rendered.

But does not death still ravage the world? How then can he be abolished? We must understand this. There are *two ways* by which the statement is sustained. First the *curse* of death is abolished ; not the act of dying, but the penalty annexed to the offence which brought death into the world. The last enemy can touch nothing of the believer but his mortal body ; and even that is to be purified by the process of the tomb. By His sacrifice on the cross the Lord Jesus expiated the guilt of those who should thereafter believe in His name. Dying in their stead He bore the penalty, and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and achieved a triumph over all the powers of darkness. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire.

Secondly. He has turned the curse into a *blessing* by His resurrection from the dead. In vain did death strive to hold the Prince of Life in his ruthless grasp. On the morning of the third day He awoke from the slumber of the grave, and came forth a conqueror, leading captivity captive. His victory over the last enemy was for our spiritual and eternal advantage. He has rendered death with all his attendant evils—the pains, the groans, the

dying strife—tributary to His saints, and made them subservient to the best and most merciful purposes of heaven. When, therefore, my christian brethren, you are oppressed by pain and worn with disease, and see death and eternity immediately before you, be not dismayed, the pardoning mercy of the Saviour has extracted the sting from this formidable foe. He has abolished the power of death to harm you, and although the earthly house of your tabernacle must be dissolved, and return to dust, yet it is only the way to your Father's house of many mansions, eternal in the heavens. All that death is now permitted to do to the saint of God, is to break the fetters which bind his spirit to this world of sorrow and of sin, to shake down his prison walls that he may escape to the land of endless liberty and rest, and gain a crown of life around the throne of God. Well, therefore, may the Apostle make the triumphant exclamation,—“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

III. The revelation of life with which this destruction of death is connected, and to which it leads, is the third part of our subject. He “hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.” We are not to understand by this that the doctrine of a future state was first announced to mankind by the ministry of Christ or His apostles, but that it was elucidated, laid open, made clear and intelligible by the teachings and the facts which the gospel publishes.

There are *three* things included in the doctrine before us.

1. The immortality of the soul is clearly expressed in the statement. Men of the profoundest minds have tried in vain to define with logical and scientific accuracy the nature of the soul. Yet this much is plain, that it is something distinct from mere animal life, since it thinks and acts independently of the body, and even when the body is at rest. Some glimmers of the soul's immortality the sages among the heathen entertained, and urged it as

one of the strongest incentives to a virtuous life. The Old Testament saints died in the faith of another world, where they would rest from their labours, and dwell in a region where death can never sway its awful sceptre.

But the mystery, comparatively hid for ages, is now made manifest. Thus in the solemn parable of the rich man and Lazarus, our Lord teaches that the spirit of each went to its appropriate place at death. Abraham received the soul of the poor, suffering, but pious beggar; while that of the wealthy sinner was tormented in the hottest flames of the burning lake. In His conversation with the Sadducees He also propounded this great truth. These men did not believe in angel or spirit, and the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection of the dead they rejected as a fable. The Saviour told them that God was the God of the living and not of the dead, and therefore the patriarchs were still living in another state.

2. The life and immortality brought to light, includes the resurrection of the body. This is purely a doctrine of revelation. The heathen, who had some vague conception of the separate existence of the spirit, never hazarded a conjecture respecting the re-union of the two. When the sentiment was uttered by St. Paul, they treated it with great contempt. To reason, in the absence of Scripture, it would seem incredible that such an event should occur. Yet improbable as it may appear, nothing is more distinctly taught than that there shall be a resurrection of the just and the unjust. The vile body is to be changed, and fashioned after the glorious body of the Redeemer; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed. What a wonderful prospect awaits us!

“Corruption, earth, and worms,
Shall but refine this flesh;
Till my divine Redeemer comes,
To put it on afresh.

3. The text shews us the means by which this blissful state is brought to light. It lay far back in obscurity previously to the appearance of God our Saviour. The fact was the same. The death of Christ did not procure the immortality of the soul, nor the resurrection of the dead, but it secured the salvation of all who believe in Him, and His rising from the dead was the first fruits of them that sleep in Him. It was a pledge, a model, a confirmation of the fact. Holy men of old saw the faint gleam of life and immortality in the types of their law, but the luminous exhibition was reserved for the gospel. Heaven is no longer spoken of in a dark and figurative phraseology. In language plain and simple the Saviour said—"I go to prepare a place for you." The fulness of joy which is felt there, we are not yet able to understand. Suffice it therefore, that there is a home of purity—of peace—of unalloyed pleasure, in reserve for all that love the Saviour, and wait for His appearing. And it is eternal—

"While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures."

As Christians we may therefore exult in the thought—that "death is swallowed up in victory." W. KING.

ON SUBMISSION TO GOD.



James iv. 7.—"*Submit yourselves therefore to God.*"



THE duty enjoined in these words, is that of entire acquiescence in the dispensations of God, whether in His providence or grace. All His arrangements are for our good, and submission to them is required by the spirit and struc-

ture of our holy religion. Whatever may be the local and special reference of the apostle, the precept has a distinct and direct application to all the family of man. Human nature is much the same in all places, in all classes, and in every age of the world. It may be modified, and changed by time and circumstances, but its essential elements are for the most part the same. The path of the Christian *now* may in many respects be less thorny and painful than in ages past,—but trials more or less will fall to his lot. The admonition therefore is always seasonable, and embraces a sacred and practical duty which devolves upon us all.

I. *The duty required.* We are to submit ourselves unto God.

There is a submission of mind, of reason, of our understanding, to revealed truth, and there is a submission with respect to the discipline and dealings of God. The one relates to what He has taught us by holy men of old who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: the other to the regulation of our temper and conduct under the several events that may try our faith and patience.

1. The first step in submission to God, has respect to the truths of revelation. The cordial reception of these, however sublime or profound, however obscure or clear, lies at the foundation of all personal religion. There can be no fear of God, or genuine confidence in Him, dwelling in the mind that doubts or disregards the instructions of His word. Truths there doubtless are beyond the grasp of our understanding, but there are none contrary to it. We must bow to the majesty of Scripture, even where we are unable to apprehend its teaching. It is no degradation of our reason to make it submissive to what God has spoken, although we may not be able fully to understand it in all its bearings. God only wise must know better than man, and therefore the scholar must bow, and not the Teacher. To His word we must submit, and not demand that His word should submit to us. It is sufficient to know that the

doctrine whatever it might be is in the Book of God, the eternal oracles of heaven; and this satisfactorily ascertained, should at once open our hearts to embrace it.

2. But the submission particularly intended here, has respect to the *discipline* of God. This is practical; and it is to be apprehended that no small number of Christians are deficient in the duty. We are not truly followers of Christ merely because we believe the Scriptures to be inspired, because we have been baptized, because we attend the ordinances of religion, or because we are members of some religious body. No. We have the Spirit of Christ without which we are none of His, when our faith worketh by love, when we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, and seek strength from above that we may stand complete in our obedience to all the will of God.

Does any one ask for illustration? It was displayed by Aaron who held his peace when his two sons fell in death, judicially smitten down by the righteous decree of God. It was evinced by king Hezekiah, who, when the prophet announced the impending destruction of the monarch and his throne, replied to the terrible intelligence—"Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken." It was exhibited in the placid spirit of the sorrow-smitten David, when, amidst the cursings of Shimei who was a ring-leader in the conspiracy of Absalom, he said, to his faithful servant Abishai—"Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." It was seen in the meek and placid spirit of Eli when rebuked for his remissness of parental authority, and the ephod was to be taken from his family he exclaimed in words of exemplary resignation, "it is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good." It was apparent in the conduct of Job, when messenger after messenger brought him the dismal tidings of the destruction of his cattle, his servants, and his children, "he fell down upon the ground

and worshipped, and said—the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And more than all, it is the spirit and temper of Him who hath left us an example that we should tread in His steps and walk even as He walked, and who in the hour of His bitter sorrow said—“The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Such are instances of resignation. It is the filial submission of the will and the heart to a parent’s conduct. It is not the sullen subjection of a rebel, because he knows that resistance would be useless. It is not the prostration of the spirit under calamities which surprise and overwhelm. It is the enlightened and sanctified acquiescence of our inner nature with the dealings of God, under the conviction that all His ways are just and good, and that He has our welfare in view by every trial He sends us.

II. The grounds on which the duty of submission is commended and required. Let us notice *four* of the most obvious.

1. The first is the universal disposal of a righteous and gracious providence. While what is called *natural religion* teaches this doctrine, it stands forth most prominently in the gospel. Our blessed Lord enforced it by the most beautiful and impressive illustrations. He shews us that the Providence which governs all is the Providence of a Father; and that it includes the minutest of all earthly affairs—the hairs of the head, and the fall of a sparrow. There is no truth clearer to the thoughtful mind than this, that nothing can be beyond the notice or the power of God; and yet there is no truth less practically received by a large part of mankind. They see only themselves and their neighbours, and what they name luck or chance, fortune or accident. If they prosper, it is because they have skill and health; and that they have these is a matter of course, not as the gift of God. If they have ill success or trouble, the blame is cast upon the bad advice of friends or enemies, or because they were

beset by that strangest of all beings, *misfortune*;—a something which they invest with the attributes of a real and living thing, that thwarts and blights all their devices and schemes. To such a man, submission is nothing more than a yielding to an evil that he cannot avoid. He has done his utmost to brave out the storm, and now he can but sink beneath its fury.

Not such however is the submission of the Christian. He has learnt that the same wise hand on high that gave him the blessings of his lot, gave him also the power and the disposition to employ them aright; and no less the issue, whether it were to be abased or to abound.

2. Submission is our duty — our reasonable duty, as *sinful and dependent creatures*. We are not in a position to dictate to the Almighty the manner in which He ought to deal with us. We are short-sighted creatures, and our range of knowledge is circumscribed within very narrow limits. We can know but little of the purposes of that eternal Being who sits upon the throne of the universe: and for us to pretend to know better than He what is right to be done, must be the height of folly and presumption. Can a child span with its little fingers the vast expanse of the heavens? Can a mortal hand grasp the globe in its palm? Just as easily can our finite minds take in the entire scheme of Him who is wonderful in counsel and mighty in working.

3. The third ground of submission, is the great doctrine of *redemption*. The love of One who has loved us, suffered and died for us, snatched us from the verge of everlasting woe, placed us beneath the light of the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God, called us to seek and find, if we will, a crown of heavenly glory—may well constrain us to submit for a little while to a discipline which He judges necessary to train us for the inheritance He has procured for all the redeemed. None of us can venture to compare his trials with those of the Man of sorrows. None of us can be so

despised and rejected of men as was He. If any of us should be the child of lowliness and obscurity in birth, in worldly position, in death, yet no one among us has stooped to this lowliness from such a height of glory, or for a purpose so benevolent as the redemption of man.

4. Another consideration on which this duty is founded—the last I shall mention—is that repining is as *fruitless as it is sinful*. Can murmuring better our condition? Can it relieve us of a single evil, or procure the return of a solitary comfort? To cherish regret for the valued objects we have lost, is indeed natural, but it is unavailing. It cannot restore to our hearth and our homes the beloved parent, or child, or friend we have laid in the tomb. It cannot restore the blush of health, or lighten the pressure of calamity, or beguile us of any woe. If it does aught, it is the reverse of this. It makes our wounds bleed afresh, it renews our sorrows, and sheds a darker gloom on the already sombre path. For these reasons, and many more no less cogent might be added, let us submit ourselves unto God—"looking not at the things which are seen, but with an eye of faith at those things which are not seen, for the former are temporal, the latter eternal."

H. HUNTER.

THE RAINBOW.

Ezekiel i. 28.—"*As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.*"

THERE are two other remarkable passages in the Sacred Volume where we have a direct reference to the rainbow. The first of these is in the case of Noah after the flood, on

which occasion it was made the appointed sign that the earth should be no more destroyed by a deluge of water. It was in the cloud before, and had doubtless been seen by many, but it was now selected as the seal of God that henceforth man and beast should be secure from the sweeping inundation that had, with the exception of eight persons, depopulated the globe.

The other instance in which this symbol of divine mercy is especially noticed is that in the Revelation of St. John. Often, doubtless, had the venerable Apostle seen the natural phenomenon, and admired its splendour in the broad expanse of the firmament, but it was when, being in the Spirit, he beheld the mild radiance of the emerald bow around the throne of the Deity, that his mind was overpowered with delight. It fixed his eye and heart as the pledge of that covenant of unmerited love which he was commissioned to publish. It exhibited mercy rejoicing against judgment, and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness shedding light upon the darkest clouds of human sin and Divine indignation. It represented the dispensations of the Most High to man, as distinguished from those spiritual beings who never sinned, and those who never shall be saved. In the dark caverns of the lost the gloom is not for a single instant dispelled by one beam of light, nor despair relieved by one ray of hope. The serenity of heaven is never obscured by one frown from the face of God. But our world is the theatre on which are displayed mercy and truth, righteousness and peace in blissful combination. Of the harmony between these conflicting elements of the Divine character, the rainbow is a significant emblem, if not a type. As such we will now endeavour to explain it, and learn from it some of those lessons of God's goodness which it is designed to teach. The prophet speaks of the rainbow as the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. This brings before us the *evangelical* character of the appointment, and the spiritual blessings of the cove-

nant of grace, of which the bow in the cloud is at once a sign and a seal.

The same cause must always produce the same effect; and as the phenomenon results from the immutable laws of the refraction and reflection of the sun's rays in drops of falling rain, it is certain that the rainbow must have been occasionally exhibited from the beginning of the world. But it was thenceforth to be a pledge on the part of God, that the earth should no more be visited with a deluge. Thus we read,—“I do appoint,” as the word means, “my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token between me and the earth.” And a fit sign it certainly was, for Noah knew that there could be no rainbow except there be rain and sunshine at the same time. Whatever storms and tempests may again beat upon the world, a general flood is not to be dreaded.

Let us look, *first, at the time* when the rainbow was appointed as the pledge of mercy. The Lord had recently accepted the sacrifice of Noah. He had smelled the sweet savour of the burnt offering upon the Patriarch's altar, and had said, “I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.” In the natural course of cause and effect this beautiful token of heavenly compassion could not have been seen, except with the appearance of that dreadful element which had already destroyed the world. Scarcely had the waters subsided, when the showers began again to fall; and with them the terrors of Noah were doubtlessly awakened. At this crisis the bow was pointed out in the cloud as a conspicuous sign and pledge of mercy; so that when the second father of mankind should gaze upon the lowering sky, he might see the seal of his safety and be relieved from his painful apprehensions. And as if the Eternal Mind needed a memento, He says,—“I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant.” Amazing condescension! That Jehovah should thus stoop to the creature's weakness, and give His children line upon line for the

confirmation of their faith, and the ground of their confidence in His mercy and love.

Having thus glanced at the institution of the bow in the cloud as the pledge of mercy to Noah and to the world at large, that the earth should no more be destroyed by a deluge, we will proceed to consider its evangelical character and import. We have already regarded it as the symbol of mercy; and independently of its being a divinely-instituted type, it has a variegated significance which it is delightful to notice. The beauteous colours of the bow in the cloud, so exquisitely blended and harmonized, shew the skill of the Great Author of all things, and the prophet tells us in the text, that it was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." In the vision of St. John he tells us it was in sight like unto an emerald—a bright beautiful green—one of the most refreshing of nature's colours.

In the combination of tints, the one merging into the other, yet preserving its own distinctiveness, may we not recognize the harmonious association of the Divine attributes in the redemption of man, while mercy, so to speak, is the emerald grace, presenting the prominent and refreshing hue? What to a sinner is the power of God without mercy but the sure pledge of his destruction? What is infinite wisdom, but the certainty of his detection? Holiness banishes the unclean for ever from the presence of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Justice records the sentence of his condemnation in characters of flame. But how blessed the change when mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other! Then all the perfections of the Deity appear, like the beautiful colours of the rainbow, each reflecting the glory of the Lord, and forming an arch of salvation on which the sinner may build his hopes of everlasting life without fear.

The text says, that the bow appears in "the cloud in the day of rain." There is something interesting in this circumstance. Has it not a religious signification? The

rainbow always tells of storms. It glitters in the cloud—it is made of tears. And chequered indeed is the sky, and stormy the life of every child of Adam. There are tempests of affliction, of temptation, of persecution; and often does the christian's spirit seem overwhelmed by a deluge of sorrows. There is the dark cloud of adverse and mysterious providences, the frowning sky of divine chastisements, the thick and gloomy covering of the shadow of death. But dark as the tempest may be, and showery as may be the elements, there we may discover the bow in the cloud,—the pledge of the faithfulness of God.

It has been proverbially said, "*The thicker the cloud, the brighter the bow.*" May not this convey some spiritual instruction? It is when the world proves most unsatisfying and trials most severe, that we learn to appreciate the value of the promises of God, and the inward supports of His presence. It is in the darkest and most threatening storm that we most truly feel the power of that hope which, if Christians, we "have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that which is within the veil." When disappointment, sickness and sorrow, assail us from every quarter, then to enjoy the delightful solace, that "God is the strength of our heart and our portion for ever," is the sweetest feeling that the heart can know. Then like the bow in the cloud, it is heaven's brightest smile on the dark horizon of earthly distress; and amidst all the ruffling scenes of time, it diffuses over the spirit a calm serenity—a peace which earth can neither give nor take away.

There is yet one other view of this subject. In order to the appearance of the rainbow, the opposite side of the sky must be clear. Is there nothing significant in this? We would not be fanciful, but does it not intimate that the blessed God remembers mercy in the midst of judgment? And who is there among us that cannot sing of mercy as well as of judgment? There is no state on earth so sorrow-

full, but admits of some alleviation. However severe our worldly trials and spiritual distresses, we have still great reason to be thankful, that they are not heavier than they are, and still more cause of thankfulness that we are yet within reach of mercy. How often have our afflictions been moderated, and when one source of sorrow has been opened another has been closed ! Thus "He stayeth His rough winds in the day of His East wind." There hath happened no temptation but what is common to men, and in every case "He hath made a way for our escape, so that we have been able to bear it." Dark as has been the cloud, the rainbow has illumined it, and the bright light of heavenly mercy has shone over the weeping sky.

Except the beams of the sun should irradiate the horizon, in vain should we look for the shining pledge of heaven's mercy in the arched firmament. May we not learn some moral lesson from this ? Unless the Sun of Righteousness shines upon the means of grace, how cold and lifeless they are ! All the ordinances of religion are dependent for His blessing to render them profitable and saving to the soul.

Finally. The rainbow is a sign of the *perpetuity* of *redeeming* mercy. When the blessed God set it up as a token of the covenant, He said, that it should be "for perpetual generations." Since that eventful day, the seasons have sped their uninterrupted round, and the planets have rolled on in their paths with wondrous regularity. Four thousand years have mingled with the ages before them since the bow of mercy was first appointed ; and one thousand eight hundred years have passed since the fountain was opened for sin, yet it continues to flow in its original efficacy, and shall never lose its power or its freshness till all the ransomed are brought home to eternal glory.

SAMUEL B. BURCHORD.

HEAVEN—A FATHER'S HOUSE.

John xiv. 2.—“*In my Father's house are many mansions.*”

SUCH is the representation with which our blessed Lord, in His last affectionate address to His sorrowing brethren, cheered their spirits under the pressure of grief which the prospect of His departure had awakened. My Father's house! Sweet and consoling is this designation of our future home. It is expressive of locality no less than of affection. And is not this vast universe the House of our Father, and where He is, no matter where, is the very homestead of heaven. But this is not the thought with which the sympathizing Redeemer would console the minds of His disciples. There is a definiteness in His words. It is not the universality of the divine presence, but a place for our abode, and with as intimate a home relation, as the dearest fireside on this earth can have—the domestic dwelling of a Father.

“We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” This is the language of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and may be taken as a guide in the interpretation of our text. We will therefore fix our thoughts awhile on some of the glorious characteristics of that heavenly edifice in which we are to have our final and everlasting home.

First. It is a *building of God*. He made it, without the aid of creature, or created agency. It is His work, and differs in kind from any thing material. It is a building of God, and not merely so, but as the expression may allow,

something proceeding from Him, rather as an effluence from His own essence, than an ordinary effort of creative power. It is said that God is light, that He dwelleth in light, and Christians are said to be the children of light dwelling in God. Now, if we knew or could comprehend the immateriality of light, we might find in that something more than a mere symbol of our Father's house in heaven. This building of God, may be as different from all material constructions or creations of which we have any knowledge or conception, as the light itself is different from the forms of material substances which we see around us, or our hands may have handled.

Secondly. It is a house *not made with hands*. This may serve to explain its spiritual and ethereal character. It is not constructed piece by piece, as man of necessity builds his dwelling, but is one and indivisible, as if an orb in the heavens were constructed of one perfect diamond. All possible forms of architecture on earth are made with hands. The temple of Solomon was so prepared, that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard while it was being erected; yet it was all built with hands, and its glory was to pass away into forgetfulness. Man has achieved wonders in raising material structures. He has imitated the very forms of nature with great beauty and grandeur. Almost every thing in this breathing world, the hand of man has wrought with exquisite skill into a resemblance of its original; trees, plants, roses, feathers, flowers, colours, birds—all the creations of God on which the orb of day sheds his rays. The first crystal palace was a house made with hands: but its idea sprung from the effort of a gardener to construct a glass covering for a costly and beautiful lily from a foreign land which his ducal master was most anxious at any cost to preserve. But life and light cannot be handled, cannot be imitated, cannot be put together, nor any thing approximating to a spiritual habitation. So this House of our Father is presented to our view as inconceivably superior

in essence and in glory to any thing with which we are acquainted in the frame of this material universe.

Thirdly. The future home of Christians is *eternal*. In this respect it also differs from all things else. Whatever the human eye beholds is transitory; nothing with which we are conversant is for ever abiding. The spheres and orbs of glory, constructed with such infinite skill and grandeur by the wisdom and benevolence of the Creator, are yet to be laid aside. The earth on which we tread, and the heavens by we are surrounded, are to be rolled together as a scroll. Divinely glorious as they are, they shall melt with fervent heat, and all the apparatus of nature be dissolved in the flames of a final conflagration. Thus the Psalmist speaks: "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. As a vesture shalt thou fold them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same from everlasting to everlasting." And thus the house of our Father where He especially resides, will be exempt from the universal destruction of all material things, as a building imperishable, indestructible, which no storm can touch, no fiery element consume.

Fourthly. The future home of Christians, is the *dwelling place of God*, where there is fulness of joy. This, perhaps, is the prominent thought which our blessed Lord would impress upon the minds of His brethren. It is that place, wherever in the universe it may be, where He, the fountain of life, and light, and bliss, manifests the brightness of His perfections, and sheds His smile on every spirit around the sunshine of His throne. "My Father's house," signified even to the Saviour, a divine and beloved locality, from which for a season He had departed, had laid aside His glory, had yielded up His robes of Deity, till He should return to be re-invested with them, after having in human form accomplished by His sufferings and death that glorious redemption, which He had undertaken for a captive and

condemned world. The designation signified His house in Heaven.

Thus He said when on earth—"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again I leave the world and go to the Father." And to Mary in the garden at the mouth of the tomb which He had but that moment quitted He said—"Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." The throne of God and of the Lamb is there; and His servants see His face with His name stamped on their foreheads. There is no temple there, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. There is no need of the sun nor of the moon for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Here Christians are under a cloud, and even in their brightest scenes, they see through a glass darkly. But the veil of earth, the folds of flesh shall be removed, and the uncovered spirit, purified from the defilements of sin without fault, spot or wrinkle, shall see God face to face and its joy shall be full.

Finally. In our Father's house there is ample accommodation for all the members of the family. There is room for all, and all who are there have a right to all its privileges and comforts, for they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. For them the building, so to speak, is fitted up. "I go to prepare a place for you," are our Lord's memorable words. They hold their mansions in fee simple. They are not tenants that may be ejected at the caprice or pleasure of the Proprietor. There is no incumbrance on the property, no mortgage upon the house or domains to be paid off. Eternal life is the gift—the free, unclogged gift of a generous Father to His children, procured by the sufferings and death of an elder brother to whom in behalf of all the members, the Father hath given a receipt in full of all demands. Their title to it is unquestioned, undis-

puted, indefeasible, and once in possession, can never be alienated or forfeited. So ought the House of God on earth to be in this respect some faint type of the freedom and glory of the unincumbered House of Heaven. It ought to belong to God, and be held by man simply in trust for Him. Verily we ought not to be willing to have the earthly house of Zion, where the future possessors of the heavenly building are being born and trained for their pre-eminent abode, embarrassed and oppressed with debt, since He has prepared a house of glory for us exempt from all charge, subject to no dilapidation, a freehold without expense in perpetuity for ever.

But there are many mansions there, denoting that a large company is expected. Already the multitude is beyond even an apostle's computation. St. Paul says, that the company of angels is innumerable. In addition to these pure and happy natives of the place, there will be the great and the good from all nations and ages, the crowned and the glorified, all, whose robes have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. There will be Paul and Peter and John, and all the beloved apostles and disciples who walked with Christ on earth, and shared His personal sufferings. And in those mansions there will be all those whom they were instrumental in bringing to glory. There will be the Ephesian, Corinthian, and Galatian converts—Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and Dionysius the Areopagite, and Lydia the seller of purple, and Barnabas, and Apollos, and multitudes of others from the apostolic age, will be there together. There will be Philip and the Ethiopian seen gazing—not on the Saviour's sufferings as when last they parted in the desert, but on His infinite glory. There will be Adam, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and hosts of shining witnesses of oldest time. There will be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the long series of kings and prophets who died in the faith having embraced the promises. There will be the family of Bethany

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and those humble widows who followed Christ, and ministered to Him of their substance. There will be the weeping penitent who washed His feet with her tears ; and that poor widow who cast into the treasury all the living she had. There will be the earliest noble army of martyrs and confessors, who loved not their lives unto the death. There will be the glorified forms of those Christian heroes, whose bones lie bleaching in the mountain snows, and those whose life wore out in dungeons, or who by racking tortures rode to heaven in fire. What a congregation of the good from every clime, and every nation ! Think of meeting them together ! Think of being made worthy to meet them ! Think of the only condition on which we can meet them—by faith in the sacrifice, and a participation of the spirit of one common Saviour !

But shall we meet them ? *This* is the question. How may it be known ? Ardently does the citizen long to escape from the dusty and sultry city to the sweet fields when summer spreads its glory over the face of nature: and we shall equally pant for our Father's house in glory.

THOMAS BROWN.

THE NEW HEAVENS.

2 Peter iii. 13, 14.—“*Nevertheless we, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*”

IN a preceding discourse, delivered last Sunday morning, your attention was directed to the context, in which

the apostle gives a striking description of the dissolution of the material earth and the destruction of all its works. In the text, he brings forward his views with respect to the renovation that shall follow; and then, as in the previous case, closes the topic by an affectionate and earnest exhortation to Christian diligence and fidelity, that when the Lord shall come, all who are looking for His appearance may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

The "new heavens and the new earth," which we now propose to consider, the apostle tells us, are "according to the promise" of God. The reference seems to be, to two passages in the prophecies of Isaiah. The first is found in the sixty-fifth chapter and seventeenth verse. "For behold I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The second is in the sixty-sixth chapter of the same prophet and at the twenty-second verse. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain." In agreement with these predictions, St. John in a vision of the New Jerusalem, "saw a new heaven and new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."

There are many questions not easy to be answered, with respect to the new heavens and the new earth here promised. One thing seems clear—that the destruction of the sea will be simultaneous with the destruction of the earth, and that in the renovated form in which the new world will appear, the purposes for which the sea was provided having been answered, there will be no ocean to separate continent from continent, or country from country. Mercantile and commercial pursuits will be no more prosecuted, and hence the vast volume of waters now so necessary, will disappear.

It has been asked by some who are devoted to subjects of this description, whether by the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, of which our text

speaks, the apostle means to say, that the globe on which we dwell, after having been purified by fire, will be fitted up again for the abode of the redeemed. To this we reply, that unless a new revelation be given from heaven, or the spirit of prophecy as under the old dispensation be shed upon man, the question can never be answered with certainty. Not a few learned and master minds, have written upon it, and have distinctly affirmed their belief that this earth will be the paradise of the blessed. To state the reasons on which they have founded their opinion, would open too wide a field for our present purpose. Suffice it therefore to say, that they have based their conclusions on this point upon the way in which they read and understand the prophetic portions of Scripture which relate to the subject: a mode of inquiry which still leaves the question exposed to much conjecture and diversity of opinion, since from the necessity of the case, there must rest a degree of obscurity upon the data of unfulfilled prophecy till He who inspired it shall lift the veil. From the apostle's statement in the seventh verse, it is evident that the day of judgment will *precede* the destruction of the world by fire. He tells us that the heavens and earth which now are, are kept in store against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The world was destroyed by a flood on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. It appears from this passage that it will be destroyed by fire with reference to the same cause, and that such destruction will involve the perdition of ungodly men, a fact that seems in the order of things to require, that they must have previously been judged and condemned. This circumstance strongly intimates that the resurrection will take precedence of the destined conflagration; and that the dead will be raised up, and those who will be living at that time, who are comprehended in the general designation of "the wicked," will at once receive their trial and their doom. The saints will previously have received theirs, for "the dead in Christ shall rise first." As far

as reason can throw light upon such a difficult point, it shews us that this must be of necessity the case, unless we can suppose that the bodies of all the dead, and the mouldering remains of a thousand generations who have gone down to the grave, will be literally consumed and burnt with the material universe—a supposition that receives no countenance either from reason or revelation.

From an examination of the teaching and doctrines of Holy Scripture on the subject, we deduce the following observations which may, perhaps, embrace the probable meaning of the renovation referred to in the text.

Our *first* remark is, that the new heavens and the new earth will be such as will exist after the world shall have been destroyed by fire—that is after the general judgment. There is not a word—not the slightest intimation, expressed or implied, of any new heaven and new earth, in which the Saviour will reign personally over His saints through a long millennial period previously to His coming to summons all nations, kindred and people to His bar. The restoration is to follow the dissolution. The new world is to be the seat and abode of righteousness. It is subsequent to the melting of the rudiments of the earth by fervent heat, that a nobler structure is to appear. Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ on earth—nothing of this world being fitted up for the abode of His saints, before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come. If the apostle had any idea of the personal appearance of Christ to dwell with his church prior to the foretold destruction by fire—if he had any knowledge that such events as the common millenarian scheme involves, would actually occur—if he really believed that they would precede the final judgment, then it is unaccountable, that when writing on such a subject—and for the very purpose of putting the question clearly before the world—he should so entirely avoid all mention of them. If he really knew as an inspired man, that the reign of our Lord on the earth would take place under his personal and

visible manifestation, for any period or at any time previous to the final winding up of the gospel dispensation, his total silence in the case before us is altogether inexplicable. In such a matter, it had been easy for him to have stated the order of the event in few words, but his having not done so is a strong presumption against the doctrine under observation.

But *secondly*, what are the ideas which we may attach to the renovated structure of the earth for which we are taught to look? St. Peter says, that notwithstanding the dissolution of the present, there will be another to succeed it, and that for this he was looking—not as an event which he expected to transpire before he should put off the tabernacle of the body, but as a fact which he believed would eventually be realized. It was a doctrine that he believed; a thing promised by Him who cannot lie, and which he felt assured would come to pass. But what are we to understand by the description? There are three ways in which the term *new* as here used might be taken. First, if a new world were literally created out of nothing, when the present is destroyed, that would answer to the expression. No one can doubt that such a creation is possible, but it is not revealed, and therefore all speculation concerning it is but a waste of words and of time. Then *secondly*, if an inhabitant of this earth should, after death and the resurrection, be translated to dwell on any other of the worlds now existing, it would be to such a person a new abode, and accord with the representation before us. This idea is beautifully illustrated in a treatise called—“*Celestial Scenery*,” by the late Dr. Dick—a work full of thought and science, well deserving the careful study of all persons. It is simple yet profound; sublime yet sober and lucid. And then finally, if this earth should be fitted up for the abode of man after the universal conflagration, it would be a new abode; and the change in all he saw and felt would be the same as to the effect and impression, as an entirely new creation. In

each therefore of these three ways, the term may be understood, since either accords with the use of the word, and fully agrees with the spirit and design of the apostle's representation. Perhaps the last, however, is the idea which is intended to be conveyed by the statement in question.

But if such be the meaning of the phrases employed, what *thirdly*, is the state of the case with relation to man? We answer, the world thus rebuilt by the Divine Architect, of purified materials, may be from time to time, the temporary abode of the righteous, after the resurrection and the general judgment. No one can say on the authority of Scripture, that it will not be: yet there are some great difficulties to be overcome, ere we can adopt the opinion which has been formed by some, that it will be the chief dwelling place, or even the residence of the redeemed for any lengthened period. Many learned expounders of prophetic visions and symbols, have eloquently descanted and ingeniously written on this point; and if it could have been demonstrated by Revelation, that after the resurrection the whole body of the righteous and the countless millions of the saved will find a home in this reconstructed and purified planet, their zeal and industry in prosecuting the inquiry, had long ere this have crowned their labours with success. But the Scripture gives no support to the opinion; it rather seems to point to an opposite conclusion. Our Lord told His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them in the house of his Father, and that He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He was, they also should be. He likewise said—"where I am, there shall also my servant be." St. Paul represents the dead in Christ as rising from their graves, and joining the Christians who shall then be alive, caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with Him. There seems in fact, one insurmountable difficulty in the way of the theory itself. No one can soberly suppose, that our little planet, even if there be literally no more sea, is suffi-

ciently spacious to furnish a dwelling place for all the unnumbered millions that are to be saved, at one time. If I may freely state my own opinion on a point where all is mere conjecture, it is this—that the earth may be revisited from time to time by the redeemed, and that in its purified form it may be one of the “many mansions,” that are to be fitted up for them. There are several considerations on which I am wont to rest this supposition, for it can be nothing more. First, it seems to have been a law of the Creator, that the earth in its progress should be prepared by successive changes for a higher, and still higher order of beings. It has existed for countless ages before it was fitted to be an abode for man, and according to the discoveries of geology, was occupied by monsters of an inferior order of existence which have long since passed away, to make room for a nobler race, to be succeeded probably in their turn, by beings more exalted still. Then secondly, as we have no proof of the absolute annihilation of any material world, though some planets have disappeared, it seems to accord most with probability, that whatever radical changes the earth may undergo by flood or fire, it will not be annihilated. It may change its form, but may still exist. It is not easy to believe that a world where the Son of God appeared—lived, and died, and rose again, shall be utterly blotted out of the universe. It agrees more with all the ideas and feelings we can have on such a subject, that it should be restored to its primitive loveliness, than that it should be swept out of being. Formed primarily with a view to illustrate the glory of its Creator, and to display His grace and mercy in the redemption of its fallen inhabitants, it seems highly probable that it will be preserved in some appropriate form to be the theatre for the exhibition of such wisdom and love in far distant ages to come. And then *thirdly*, to the redeemed, it would be most interesting again to visit the spot where the great work of their redemption was accomplished; where their Lord and Saviour con-

descended to be born, and where He made atonement for sin; and where also there would be so many thrilling recollections and associations, even after its purification by fire, connected with the infancy of their existence, and their preparation for eternity. Piety would at least wish, that the world where Bethlehem, Gethsamene, and Calvary are, should never be extinct. But with all these attractions and mementos, there is no ground for believing that this globe will be their permanent abode. It is mere speculation, but it seems to accord best with what we know of the wisdom and goodness of God, and with the important position which our world occupies in the government of the Creator, to suppose that it may be remodelled and refined, blessed with balmy air, exempt from every kind of disease, free from every evil—physical and moral; and therefore the occasional residence of glorified beings, the friends of the Redeemer. Hospitals, jails, police, arsenals for war, courts of law, workhouse unions for the relief of the poor, the infirm, and the aged, there will be none: “the former things shall have been done away.” Nay, we go farther, and suggest, that the saints will, it is not improbable, make their winged flight from world to world, and survey the wonders and the works of the Divine Architect as they are displayed in different planets. The universe so vast, seems to have been fitted up for such a purpose; and nothing else of which we can conceive will be so adapted to give employment to active spirits without weariness, in the interminable duration before them. And then finally, the new heavens and the new earth will be perfectly holy—“wherein dwelleth righteousness.” It will be free from fraud, injustice, speculation, and vice. It will be untainted by sin, uncursed by war, unvisited by pestilence, unblighted by death. It will witness no tear, be agitated by no tempests, be desecrated by no atrocity. Hitherto its history for the most part has been a history of crime and passion—of its nature, developments, results. There have been no perfectly holy beings

resident upon it since the first transgression, save He who came to redeem it. There has been no perfectly holy place—city, town, village, hamlet; neither any perfectly holy community. But in entire contrast with this, the occupants of the renovated world, whether stationery or otherwise, will be perfectly pure, perfectly united, perfectly happy. “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new!”

We have now given utterance to a few thoughts on the sublime and exciting theme of the future state and abode of the righteous. It only remains, that in conclusion, we direct our attention for a moment to the practical purpose to which we should apply the doctrine of the renovated globe. This is the apostolic deduction and counsel—“Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” To be happy is a leading and primary object of every man’s pursuit. He seeks this boon in a thousand ways, and in an endless diversity of channels. But it is here set before us as a brilliant object, which we are commanded to pursue with all diligence. We are directed so to live, as to be prepared to enter a world where we shall be perfectly pure, where all around us will be pure, and where every being we meet shall be “holy as God is holy.” To the vision of faith, and the yearnings of hope, how exquisitely delightful is the prospect of such an everlasting home! And how refreshing is the view which the terms here used supply us of what the whole body of believers will one day become! St. Paul speaking on this subject employs the same words, and shews us that this exalted state of final purity is secured by the death of Christ who gave Himself to the pangs of dissolution, that He might redeem, and sanctify His church, and “present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be

holy and without blemish." There will be a period in its history when all its members shall be holy. It cannot be denied that at present there are many spots and stains and the most perfect are sanctified only in part. But when in the future world the church shall be presented to its Redeemer, clothed in the robes of salvation, there shall be no unholy member—not one deceiver or hypocrite—not one covetous or avaricious person—not one that shall pain the heart of his friends by the impurity of his life. And among all the untold millions that shall be collected to traverse the unfallen, or the renovated world of the universe, there shall be no envy, malice, pride, backbiting, or vanity ; no annoying conflict in the heart with evil passions, nor aught that can defile the soul. Who would not be diligent to be found prepared for such society in the new world of everlasting purity, peace, and joy ! Now to God, &c.

J. R. BRECKENRIDGE.

CHRIST THE WONDERFUL.

Isaiah ix. 6.—“ *And His name shall be called Wonderful.*”

THESE words form a part of one of those remarkable prophecies which were spoken by the prophet Isaiah, concerning the promised Messiah. The expression, “His name shall be called,” is an idiom of the Hebrew language, denoting that He should be what His name implied. We have the same mode of speech in the address of the angel to Joseph respecting the Redeemer—“thou shalt call His name Jesus ; for He shall save His people from their sins.”

The word *Jesus*, signifies Saviour, and the name was given to Him because of the salvation He came to procure and to publish. For the same reason His name was called *Wonderful*, because He is what that word signifies.

Let us apply this name to the Saviour in three respects—His *person*—His *perfection* and His *work*. May the Holy Spirit enable us to apprehend the meaning of this remarkable appellation, so that we may have a correct view of the wonderful character of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

First. He is *wonderful in His person*. He is described as “a child born, and a son given” unto the world. Was He then no more than a man, distinguished indeed above His fellows, but still no more than a mortal man? Far otherwise. Though He partook of flesh and blood, that He might be like unto His brethren, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,” and therefore truly man, yet was He “God with us.”

“Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh ;” combining in His person all the essential attributes of the Godhead, with all the sympathies and tender emotions of Manhood. This constitution of His nature, so extraordinary and so singular, forms the ground of the great work of redemption. Take away His *humanity*, and He has no sacrifice to offer; take away His *Deity*, and the merit of His sacrifice is destroyed, His intercession is an empty name, and the whole scheme of salvation revealed in the gospel, is broken into fragments, and scattered to the winds. Take away the doctrine of Christ’s person as “of one substance with the Father,” and of His being at the same time, and in a way incomprehensible to us, “made of a woman,” the root and offspring of David, and the system of the gospel is an inexplicable and confused thing; and leaves the world still dead in trespasses and sins.

Wonderful, indeed, is the blessed Redeemer, in His original and underived nature, possessing as God, all possible perfections in infinite fulness. But He is especially

wonderful as God—man ; as having displayed from the beginning of time, the glory of the Lord of Hosts in the form of an Angel, and even of a Man. When on earth He exacted the homage and adoration due to Jehovah alone, and yet communed with men in the most condescending manner. While inflexibly just to punish the obstinately rebellious, He held the gift of pardon in His hands to bestow or withhold it at His pleasure. While obedience to His voice ensured the favour of Omnipotence, to despise or provoke Him exposed the delinquent to all the vengeance of offended Deity. Thus with the sympathies and affections of a Man, He combined all the power and exercised all the prerogatives of God.

Secondly. He is *wonderful in His perfections*. We have seen that He was man, but we shall now discover the difference between Him and other men. That wide difference appears, in His *moral qualities*. “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” He was innocence itself, purity itself, truth itself ; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. It was a wonderful sight to see the man Christ Jesus, going through this polluted and polluting world without a stain, contracting no taint of sin from the sinners amongst whom He lived ; neither provoked by their contradiction, nor intimidated by their malice, nor turned aside from the object of His mission by the sneer of the scorner or the threatening of the mighty. Such a sight had never been witnessed upon earth since the forbidden fruit had been plucked in paradise. It was a wonder to angels, to see a being in mortal form, traversing through the mazes of this revolted planet unspotted by the impurities which lay in His path, and extorting the confession of His judge—“There is no fault in Him at all.” Such an High Priest became us, that He might be both merciful and faithful in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Again. Christ is wonderful *in knowledge*. Peter said

to Him—"Lord, thou knowest all things." And this witness is true. He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man. On many occasions, and in a variety of ways, He displayed his Omniscience. He knew Nathaniel as an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile, even before Philip had introduced him to Christ. He knew where Peter would find a fish in the sea with tribute money sufficient to pay the demanded tax. He knew which of the twelve would betray Him, while as yet the devil had not entered the soul of Judas to incite him to perpetrate the deed of darkness and blood. All things are open and naked to His eye. He is perfectly acquainted with the most minute particulars of our life, both public and private. If like Nathaniel, we live in the habit of secret prayer and meditation, and are thus Christians indeed, He knows it, and is with us in the closet no less than in the sanctuary. To the devout and spiritually minded, this is a cheering thought. But then on the other hand, if any among us, though called disciples, should, like Judas, be His enemies, in reality, He knows the treachery, fixes His eye upon the traitor, and will at length expose him, as He did His own betrayer, to his final and dreadful ruin.

In wisdom also, the Son of God is wonderful. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom," as well as of "knowledge." How strikingly this appears in the work of creation! All things were created by Him and for Him, and without Him was nothing made that is made. Well may the Psalmist exclaim—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom thou hast made them all." As the *man Christ Jesus*, He manifested this principle so vividly, that even His enemies were astonished at His doctrine. Often did He foil them in their subtle attempt to "catch Him in His talk;" till at length, finding it impossible to entangle Him thus, "they durst not ask Him any more questions." So brightly did His wisdom shine in all He said, that the officers who were sent to arrest Him were completely dis-

armed, and alleged to their employers as the reason for not having effected their purpose — “Never man spake like this man.”

Equally wonderful is Christ *in power*—a power sufficient to execute whatever His wisdom may devise. Looking at that helpless babe in the manger at Bethlehem, who by the natural eye would have discerned the “Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace?” So great was His condescension in leaving His heavenly glory and becoming a man for our salvation, that it mattered little to Him in what rank of life He appeared. He could have made room for Himself at the inn, but such an exercise of power could neither have advanced His dignity, nor added aught to the object of His birth. Whether in a cottage or in a palace, or a throne or in the peasant’s hovel, His humiliation would have been much the same; for the difference between one rank of life and another is as nothing compared with the difference between His glory in heaven as *the Son of God*, and His lowliness on earth as *the Son of Man*. But He came into the world not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. When the occasion required it, He could show that “all power in heaven and in earth” was lodged in His hands, and that He could give sight to the blind, health to the sick, cleansing to the leper, and life to the dead. Even the very devils were subject unto Him, while the elements of nature, the wind and the sea were calm at His bidding; types were these of that mighty power whereby He rescues the soul from bondage and death, from the storms and tempests of sin, and of that resurrection in which He will clothe His own people with a glorious body like unto His own, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

We may add that He is wonderful *in Love*, but this perfection will be illustrated by considering, *Thirdly*, the offices He fulfils for man’s salvation. These have been

described as *prophet*, *priest*, and *king*, under each of which we shall see the propriety of the designation in the text.

As a *prophet or teacher* He is wonderful. We may ask in the language of Scripture, "Who teacheth like Him?" Into His lips, grace was poured, and hence the people at Nazareth where He had been brought up, having heard His discourse, "bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." When He addressed the question to His disciples, many having left Him, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." He unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. He opened the understanding that they might understand the Scriptures and expounded all things concerning Himself. And then, as now, by the teaching of His spirit, "the entrance of His word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

As a *Priest* He is also wonderful. The priests under the law, were made priests "after the law of a carnal commandment, but He after the power of an endless life." There were many appointed, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because He continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." And hence the delightful assurance which the apostle draws from this superiority—"Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The priest's office under the law, was to offer sacrifices for sin; but those sacrifices were only representations of that great sacrifice which our blessed Lord offered, when He on the cross, made His soul an offering for sin. The perfect purity of His nature qualified Him to put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and entitled Him to enter into heaven with His own blood, there to appear in the presence of God for us. St. John in vision, saw Him there "a Lamb as it had been slain," prosecuting His work of mercy "as our advocate

with the Father;" a priest upon His throne, and a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

And He is wonderful *as King*. To this end He was born, and by virtue of His obedience unto death, He is "head over all things to His church," and though "we see not yet all things put under Him," yet the day is coming when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." And He is no less wonderful in *His gifts* as King, than in His dominion as Lord of all. "My God," says St. Paul, "shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Who among you, brethren, would not wish to be a subject of such a King? Who would not desire to live under His peaceful sceptre! "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." But while He is rich in mercy, He is terrible in wrath. "As for those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me," are His own words. Beware then, of braving the vengeance of the eternal King. "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way when His wrath is kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they who trust in Him."

E. TROWBRIDGE.

THE CAPTIVE DELIVERED.

Romans viii. 20, 21.—“*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*”

PERHAPS there is no passage in the New Testament that has been deemed more difficult of interpretation than this. Without attempting to controvert the various opinions of many learned commentators, who have bestowed much labour upon its meaning, we remark, that its main design is to show the sustaining power of the gospel in the midst of trials, by the prospect of the future deliverance and dignity of the sons of God. As this appears to be the scope of the paragraph from the 19th to the 23rd verse, by bearing it in mind, we shall, at least, obtain a practical view of its essential and important signification and usefulness.

“The creature,” says the apostle, “was made subject to vanity:” that is, mankind by their connection with Adam, became subject to disappointment, sorrow, and death—“not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope.” This is to say—we, as the children of a degenerate parent, are not the *willing* choosers of our fallen state. We are involved in the sin of another; and God in His justice, has doomed us to trouble and pain. But our condition is not without alleviation. There is hope in reserve, the hope of reunion with our Maker, of attaining deliverance from the dominion of sin and death, and the hope of a blessed immortality: “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into

the glorious liberty of the children of God." While all creation groans and is in a state of thralldom and trial, and will be materially benefited by the restoration of man to the purity and peace which the gospel in its triumphs shall promote, the christian alone has the certain prospect and assurance of a final rescue and deliverance from the corruption and vanity of the present world. Whatever may be the case with the animal creation and the wicked, the sons of God shall be manifested, break from the bondage of evil and of death, and emerge into freedom and glory.

Such being the general import of the text and its connection, let us now proceed to the examination of its particulars. It puts before us,

First. The characteristic condition of human life. The apostle describes it as a state of *vanity*, that is, as frail and dying, as exposed to trials, temptations, and cares; and to conflicts, vexations, and death.

There is no substantial joy apart from God, and His gracious presence. This was the bliss of Adam in Paradise, but he fell, and the introduction of vanity was the sequel to his fall. How else are we to account for the ruggedness of the scene in which we are placed? Could a Being, wise, powerful, and good, have created man as He now is?—man, at variance with his Creator, making gold his idol, fluttering over the wide field of dissipation, and eagerly grasping every forbidden fruit, his thoughts and affections subservient to the fashion of a perishing world, scorning virtuous poverty, crouching to gilded worthlessness, his soul chained down to the very dust? Could the all-wise Creator have originally formed so empty a thing as this? No, brethren, no. The creature was not originally made subject to vanity—the sin of the first pair occasioned this subjection with all its follies and woes.

When we look around upon our fellow creatures, and behold them bartering every thing for love of this present world, and never reflecting on what is to become of their

souls hereafter, how strongly we feel the force of the preacher's exclamation—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" When too, we visit the bedside of the dying, and mark how poor, how feeble, how disfigured an object is the human frame when death is making his visible inroads, and ready to tear out the fluttering remnant of life from the struggling but powerless body—how deeply is vanity inscribed on every feature! And when the last breath is drawn, and the eye can kindly gaze upon friends no longer; when the spirit is fled, and the countenance is changed, and a mass of unconscious clay, cold and repulsive, alone remains—who that stands by is not ready to change the exulting language of the apostle into a sorrowful lamentation, and exclaim, "O death, *here* is thy sting! O grave, *here* is thy victory!" Such is the man, and the text informs us,

Secondly, How he became subject to this transformation: "not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope." And who is this but the Omnipotent himself? Wisdom and justice decreed that Adam should suffer in his posterity as well as in himself, since the propagation of sin was essentially involved in the propagation of his likeness. Even among men, there is an imputed conveyance of the virtues or the vices of the parent to the unconscious children. It is founded in the nature of things. If our first parents had remained innocent, we should have been partakers of their innocence and happiness: but they transgressed; and a righteous God has involved us in the consequences of their transgression.

But in subjecting the creature to vanity, He left him still *in hope*. The first words of promise broke upon the ears of the fallen pair, before they were driven from the rosy bowers of Eden. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." When the apostle wrote, the magnificent plan of redeeming love had taken place: and he with thousands beside, had been called to a knowledge of the truth and the possession of hope. The cross was his glory; the

prospect of heaven was his triumph; hope was his anchor amidst the billows of the deep.

And who can tell the influence of this grace of the Spirit in the Christian heart? It can kindle a light even in the dungeon's gloom. It has made the martyr sing at the stake, and filled him with joy, even while the flames were wrapped around him. It is a sweet companion, ever cheering the believer onward, tendering him sweet consolation while he is subject to vanity for a season. It is an angel of mercy, smoothing the dying pillow, and reconciling us, as we pass out of life, one after another, to the cold and silent grave, and the dilapidating process of corruption.

But *Thirdly*, What is the specific object of this hope? The second verse of my text explains it. "Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is a delightful promise, and might well cause our hearts to burn within us. It is the proclamation of freedom to prisoners, the announcement of emancipation to the enslaved. It is the publication of health to the diseased, and of purity to the defiled. Who may not be stirred by such glorious tidings—such magnificent prospects? Sin and death are grappling with us, and menacing us with gloom of everlasting sleep, or the more dismal destiny of eternal despair, for hope is extinct in hell. But the lips that cannot deceive, the word that cannot be broken, and the power that cannot be resisted, have engaged to deliver us. And into what shall we be *delivered*? O transporting assurance "into the glorious liberty of the children of God"

And is not this prospect animating? Is not our present life for the most part a state of slavery? What bondage we are under to our unruly wills and affections! What an unceasing mutiny of the passions against the judgment! The best christians are sensible of this tyrannous dominion over their strivings after better things. And they wrestle daily against it. The antagonist may be weakened, but he can-

not be dislodged, until the day of final deliverance arrives. Who does not feel humbled when he calls to mind the ascendancy, which at some period or other, evil passions have exercised over him? Who can retrace the days of youth, without being abashed at the recollection of the tyranny of sin? And is there one of us, even in the maturity of life, who can congratulate himself on exemption from the power of the enslaver? Even in the temple of God where we now are, the desolator has been gathering up his spoils, and by secular calculations or frivolity of thought, mingling the world with the offices of religion, and thus fastening upon us an additional badge of our subjection to his power. But an hour will arrive, when the tyrant shall be trampled in the dust, and the song of victory shall be heard—"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down." "The creature is delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

But there is another slavery from which we are promised deliverance—the dominion of death. Ah! is he not a terrific conqueror? What pains we take to ward off the period of his approach! How we tremble at any serious attack of illness! How we rejoice when the foe is for a time defeated, and we are enabled to leave the chamber of sickness, and breathe once more the fresh and balmy air as we walk abroad! For a while we have escaped his grasp; but he will conquer at last. Are we not the trembling slaves of his invincible power? Does he not mercilessly tear from us our dearest connexions, making mothers childless, and children orphans—severing brothers from sisters, husbands from wives—friend from friend—turning joy and animation into mourning and woe, exchanging the mansion of social comfort for the cold and damp tenement of clay!

But we are not left in despair. The christian is not doomed to vanity and vexation of spirit for ever. There

will be a glorious deliverance at last. Christ shall reign among his saints in majesty unveiled: and "they shall walk with Him in white" with crowns on their heads, and palms in their hands. The courts of heaven shall be more enchanting than the walks of Eden. The crystal throne of Him who has bought them with His blood shall outshine the lustre of the sun. The regenerated body shall surpass in beauty the excellence of the original creation. Death abolished, the redeemed, awaked up in the likeness of their Redeemer, shall see Him as He is, face to face; no longer the object of faith, the topic of preaching, the theme of prophecy, the subject of history, but the visible glory of the Father,—“Light of light, very God of very God,” and then shall their joy be full.

Oh that the sons of men would with one heart embrace this mighty scheme of mercy and love! Oh that they would no longer shut their eyes against the terrible alternative which must eventually be their portion if they refuse to lay hold of the hope which the gospel sets before them! A full redemption is offered to all involved in Adam's condemnation; but if the unspeakable boon be rejected, mercy can do no more. The claim of Satan over his prey returns with unresisted power. The fleeting period of their probation here being past, mercy disappears from the horizon, and justice commences its eternal reign.

There needs no comment upon this fearful alternative. You must in faith accept deliverance “from the bondage of corruption,” by the path which Jesus Christ has opened, “into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” or be the slaves of Satan; the miserable associates of the devil and his angels for ever and ever.

J. EDWARDS.

THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER.

Romans i. 4.—“ *And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.*”

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, forms the key stone in the sacred arch of Christianity. As all the good news to man respecting salvation comes to us through the sacrifice and teaching of Christ, so the fact of His having been raised from the dead, is the fundamental proof of the truth of His mission, and of the doctrine He taught. St. Paul, therefore, in what may be called an introduction to this most important epistle, avows his apostleship, and refers to the topic of the resurrection of Christ, as the sum and substance of His ministry.

The death and resurrection of Christ, are the sole foundation of all our hopes. The fact admitted, that He who was in the beginning with God, who is over all, God blessed for ever, was manifest in the flesh, suffering, dying, rising, we have the fullest assurance that the purposes of God in this great transaction cannot fail. Whatever object He had in view in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, must be accomplished. There is no more possibility of a failure, than there is that Jehovah should abdicate the throne of the universe. The blindest faith may find light here. The deepest despondency may be relieved by this one fact undiscoverable but by Divine Revelation, that Christ the Son of God has died for our sins and risen again for our justification. This is the central fact of all our confidence. It is as a sun shot into the chaos of human speculation, throwing a radiance over all the moral creation.

On the doctrine, hang all the law and the prophets: all cluster and cling around it, deriving life and certainty from it. Whatever else may fail, the promises which are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, cemented by His death and confirmed by His resurrection, cannot fail.

St. Paul tells us in the text, that the fact of our Lord's resurrection, declared Him to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, or the Holy Spirit, whose inspired predictions by the mouth of the prophets, were now fulfilled. It will be our object at this time, to illustrate this statement, by referring to the events which accompanied and followed the great transaction, and which will clearly shew the risen Saviour to be the Son of God with power. The circumstances as narrated by the Evargelists are these.

Last at the sepulchre on the evening of the crucifixion, Mary of the town of Magdala and another Mary—attached and steadfast friends—were the first to visit the tomb on the morning of the third day. They rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. With love as strong as their's it is not difficult to conceive the sorrow in which this Sabbath was passed. "O that the Sabbath was over! How long its hours, how tedious its moments fly!" we seem to hear them saying—not that they may behold the face of their crucified Lord, for that face beaming with life they do not appear to have expected to see again. But the promise of His rising seems to have been remembered only by His enemies. As they who watch for the morning, so did these faithful women wait for the return of the light, that they might enjoy the only comfort now left them, that of visiting the grave of their beloved Lord. When, therefore, the first ray broke over the mountains which girdled the city on the east, they rose up, at an hour, when we would have thought female timidity would have kept them from going abroad, especially on a visit to the chamber of the dead, and entered on the path that led to the sepulchre.

To the third day all the types and prophecies had pointed, as that on which Christ was to rise. He Himself had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." It was fitting that some competent time should elapse between the death of Christ and His return to life. Had He revived immediately on being taken down from the cross, it might have been doubted if He had really died. But when we see Him consigned to the grave, and continuing in it for the space of thirty-six hours, there is no room for any doubt as to His actual decease. But on the other hand it was proper that He should not remain long in the tomb, otherwise His body might have seen corruption, and this would have contradicted the prophecy that He should not.

Wending their way to the cave where the dear remains were entombed, the two Marys said one to the other—"who shall roll us away the stone from the doors of the sepulchre?" Of the rising of their Lord they seem to have had no thought, notwithstanding it was the theme of prophecy, and had lately been foretold in their hearing by Christ Himself. Their object was to anoint the body of their dear and buried Friend, with the sweet spices they had purchased for the purpose. The stone which covered the mouth of the sepulchre, was placed there by His enemies to prevent the return of Christ from the grave. It might have been thought that His persecutors would have been satisfied with taking His life. But as the love of His friends extended beyond His death, so also did the hatred of His foes. The words however that He had spoken while alive still haunted them, and though they had called Him a deceiver yet the stone, the seal, the watch, for which they applied to Pilate betrayed a fear that His words may yet turn out to be true. Even in the hour of victory, they anticipate defeat. How much we owe these men! To the enemies of the gospel we are greatly indebted for the clear and unsuspecting evidence of the great fact by which the gospel is

established. They guarded the sepulchre by every precaution which fear can suggest and malice employ. This is a new tomb, and therefore should any one come forth from it, it must be He, and no other, whose body Joseph and his friends had carried thither. This tomb is hewn in the rock : it has only one entrance, and that is carefully sealed and strongly garrisoned, beyond the power of fraud and violence. These means to keep the Redeemer in the tomb, and to prevent His resurrection, are unquestionably great vouchers to the world of the truth of that resurrection. The more numerous the guards posted at the sepulchre, the more numerous the witnesses of the triumph of Christ, and declarative of the fact that He is the Son of God with power.

But other and mightier guards were around this grave. Here were angels of heaven keeping watch over the sepulchre, that He who lay in it might not come forth till the uttermost farthing had been paid. Christ in the grave was the prisoner of Divine justice. For our transgressions He had been stricken, and when He had suffered the pains of death, He was locked up as it were in the chambers of the earth, from which He must not emerge, till some public token has been given that the Father has received His obedience unto death as a full discharge in behalf of all who shall hereafter believe on His name. Amid signs of awful terror the Saviour dies, but the morning breaks ; and amid signs of light and glory He revives. Amid the shadows of the eve weeping friends carried Him to the tomb, but amid the shouts of rejoicing earth, and the songs of exulting heaven angels roll back the stone, and lead Him forth with gladness and triumph. One of these natives of the skies, as he stood beside the tomb, and without challenge from the warriors appointed to guard it rolled back the stone, threw open the door of the sepulchre, and thus shewed that the work of redemption was done. His face "was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow: and for

fear of Him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." There was no earthly foe which these soldiers would not have dared to meet. Dangers of the most dreadful kind they were familiar with: deaths the most awful they held in contempt; but He whom they now encountered was no warrior of earth: He was one of God's host; and a single look from Him sufficed to overwhelm them with terror, and to strike them prostrate on the earth. This shews the concurrence of the Father in the resurrection of Christ, and declares Him to be the Son of God with power.

But a glory more dazzling and terrible than even that of the angel, beamed on their sight. This new splendour came not from above—it shone forth from the tomb of Joseph. To the decree of heaven man had opposed the stone, the seal, the guard. Vain and impious attempt! Although mountain had been piled on mountain, till the towering mass had reached the clouds; though the seal of ten thousand emperors had been affixed to the tomb—though a million warriors with their iron helmets, and massive staves had garrisoned the mouth of the sepulchre, all would have been as a dust of the balance. "He that sitteth in the heavens would laugh; the Lord would have them in derision." He who stood so meekly before Pilate; the same who so lately wore the purple robe and the crown of thorns; the same who died on Calvary between the thieves; the same whom Joseph carried to the tomb—now comes forth, and the soldiers recognise Him. Now, now ye warriors of Rome—now ye soldiers of Cæsar—now unsheath your swords, and shew your prowess. Why hang back in dismay? Why fall ye prostrate on the earth as dead men? Ah! the legions of hell could not retain the crucified in the tomb, and shall the armies of Rome succeed? Now is fulfilled for the second time, the ancient exultation—"The stout hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands."

This was a day of good tidings, and it did not become

the witnesses of the resurrection to keep silence. "Go, tell His disciples that He is risen" was the command of the angel to the women. It was an event not to be concealed. "Go quickly," said the angel. Where was the need of haste? The Saviour was not going immediately to His Father. No: but in this is seen the tenderness of His heart. His first thoughts are of His brethren. He had risen from the grave of death, and He would have them rise from the grave of sorrow. Many things in His life which had been mysterious were now explained. The offence of the cross was rolled away. Doctrines and predictions were now made clear: and Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power. The empty sepulchre announced the acceptance of the sacrifice which had been made on the cross. Here the middle wall of partition was broken down, and Jew and Gentile might now unite around the grave of their common Lord. Death was vanquished and trodden down by the foot of the mighty conqueror. Weeping had endured for a night, but a divine hand had girded them with gladness. No wonder they departed from the tomb—these Marys—with great joy, and went to bring the disciples word.

As they go, Jesus meets them. He whom they had gone not an hour ago to anoint in the grave, now stands before them. As the sun when he looks upon the earth through the darkness of an eclipse, so did the Saviour when they saw Him last: as the sun when the eclipse has passed away, so did the Saviour appear now. The dark cloud of suffering that had enveloped Him was dispersed for ever. When He went to the grave He left the legacy of peace, and now He comes back to administer His own testament; and as He meets them, He at once gives them a cordial greeting—Jesus saith unto them, "All hail." A mountain was pressing upon their hearts, and He thus lifts it off.

And thus shall it be with all His friends. There are few but have tasted the bitterness of seeing the grave close over

those whom they have loved. But blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. They shall rise again. As the Marys at the tomb forgot their grief, so shall we, if we are the disciples of Christ. We shall pass through the gloomy territories of death unhurt, and rise to everlasting joy.

AUSTIN CRAIG.

THE BELIEVER'S RESTING-PLACE.

Psalm xxxvii. 7. — *“ Rest in the Lord, and wait for Him patiently.”*

THIS is an excellent exhortation to one of the greatest privileges which the Christian can realize, and to the discharge of one of the most sacred duties which it becomes him to observe. To many it may be of little interest, but to the believer, amidst the battles and the anxieties of his inner life, it is a cordial to revive his fainting spirit. Never did the wounded soldier quit the field of warfare and lay by for a season the instrument of conflict; never did the weary traveller seek and desire repose; or the weather beaten mariner enter the long wished for haven with more satisfaction, than the Christian voyager embraces this gracious invitation to rest in the Lord. Every believer, indeed, does not experience the same degree of comfort and joy, but such as are spiritually minded find not in the world the rest which their soul requires. To all who have to struggle against difficulties, and hindrances, and fightings, such encouraging words as the text contains apply with force; and by such consolation and sweetness are truly experienced.

To encourage any who may be sorrowing, the invitation to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, may be of essential service, and if there are any tempted disciples of Christ among you, I would fain hope that they may derive comfort from our present meditations. Only "the heart knoweth its own bitterness;" there are thoughts and anxieties which sit heavily upon the soul, which none but the eye of God can see, and under which He alone can afford relief. But He more than observes; He sympathizes—He bears our griefs—He takes part in our sorrows—and He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. In Him therefore, we are exhorted to rest; for Him we are commanded patiently to wait. How are we to regard this direction, and what are the advantages to be derived from following it, are the two points I propose to notice.

I. In what manner are we to regard the directions which the text gives us?

We are not to suppose that indifference or unconcern on the part of man is implied, for such would be contrary to the whole tenor and spirit of the gospel: which bids us to "work out our salvation—to strive to enter in at the strait gate—and to make our calling and election sure." It is therefore while we are following in the plain path of duty, that we are to rest in the Lord, and patiently wait for His manifestation of love and mercy.

1. This direction may be applied to Christians who meet with hindrances and discouragements in the way. There always have been such, and there always will be unto the end of our earthly pilgrimage. We may at times wonder why God permits those upon whom He hath put His name to be so oppressed as they are; but herein we err. "Whosoever the Lord loveth He correcteth." His ways are not as man's ways. He has a merciful design in all that He permits, or it would not take place, and in due season He will make those things plain which now appear mysterious to us. If we were not overtaken with trials, we

should have no opportunity to shew the strength of our patience and fortitude to the honour of God. There is much to be done for the sanctification of the soul to make it meet for heaven, and afflictions are among the means by which we are trained for the inheritance of the saints in light.

However highly exalted our station in life, or however lowly; whatever our family ties, however occupied in regard to business, and however free from the common assaults of disease upon our health and strength, we all have our peculiar sorrows and crosses; and it is of the first importance that we should commit our way unto the Lord; leaving Him to direct and overrule all that concerns us. There is a vast difference between some and others, and many are called to endure much heavier trials than their brethren. If the internal care of every man were written in his countenance, many now envied for being considered happy, would call forth our pity. But to the soul that resteth on the Lord, there is grace given according to its need.

2. The direction to rest in the Lord, implies, that we realize His presence and seek after His blessing in all we undertake. To begin every day in communion with Him; to acknowledge His preserving hand through the night; to commit our way to Him who has said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," whose hand is stretched forth for our defence; who has promised to guide and to uphold us,—to live thus with God, is to enjoy His presence. And when by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we are able to cast our burden of care and sorrow upon Him who careth for us; when we exercise faith in the blessed Redeemer, and realize the efficacy of His blood and the sufficiency of His atonement to cancel our guilt, and adorn us with His robe of righteousness; and when in the spirit of filial love and confidence we are enabled to say, "Our Father" to the Governor of the universe, believing that all things are under His super-

intending hand,—then we may be truly said to “rest in the Lord.” And there is the privilege of the Christian. Confide in Him, brethren, for He may be trusted. Rely upon Him, for He is able to support. Be resigned to Him, for He has a Father’s love; and thus will you attain to what is sought in vain elsewhere—abiding peace and joy.

3. To rest in the Lord, is to commit all our ways to Him, and calmly confide in His wisdom and love. This may be illustrated by a person who embarks on board a vessel destined to carry him across the seas. In that ship, both his person and his property are confided to the care of another. In this case, as a passenger, he has no right to interfere with the management of the ship’s course. That is the province of the commander. Storms and tempests may arise. The sea may foam and swell; clouds may gather blackness; the vessel may weather the storm, or it may be rent asunder and prove a wreck; the passenger cannot prevent it, nor save himself from a grave in the deep. In like manner, to rest in God, is to leave all to Him as the Great Commander. In some particulars the parallel holds not. The captain at sea may be vanquished by the violence of the storm, but the Captain of our salvation is mighty; the seaman may be deficient in skill—but the Lord is infinitely wise; uncertainty attends the termination of a voyage, but the Christian’s passage through this tempestuous world is certain—“I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

Rest then, brethren, in the Lord. Wait patiently for Him; the time of deliverance is not yet arrived, but it shall come. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”

II. Let us briefly advert to some of the advantages to be derived from following the directions given in the text.

1. It will yield us a *peace* which the world can neither give nor take away. Neither rank nor affluence; neither worldly amusements nor human learning, can speak peace to a soul bowed down with trouble. Each of these, and all

of them combined, have proved insufficient to raise the mourner's drooping head—to still the anxieties which rise in the bosom, or to administer consolation to one who is wounded by ingratitude ; but acquaintance with God can afford, has afforded, and will ever afford peace. Often has the afflicted Christian under the conflicts of his spirit been ready to exclaim—" Oh that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest." But why flee away to procure rest? God is at hand—rest in Him. He can support you. He has done so. Then trust Him still. He changes not. Lay your burdens before Him. Pray, that if it be His good pleasure to remove them, He would do so ; but if not that He would give you strength to bear them. And you may add, " Lord, if it so seem good unto Thee, I am content—thy child shall not murmur."

This would be a resting in God ; and it would be accompanied with a quietude to which the generality of men are strangers. The promise is—" Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee." And " they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength—for it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

2. *Desires shall be fulfilled.* " Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass." " In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." This, of course, must be regarded with some restriction. It can be applied only to those desires which are according to the mind of God. We may ask for our daily bread, for preservation from evil—for deliverance from temptation—for all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Here we cannot err. Whatever is the subject of promise, we may make it matter of supplication.

3. To the Christian resting in God and waiting patiently for Him, *all events shall have a happy termination.* It is one of the distinguishing features of religion, that however it may begin—under whatever pangs, and bitter conflicts of

soul it may be carried on, it is sure to end well. We may be hindered and discouraged—difficulties which may be at first sight thought insurmountable, may arise—but the Almighty hand can dispel them all, and He who made a passage for the ransomed thousands of Israel through the Red Sea, will shew Himself unchangeable in power and love. We may toil and labour under many inconveniences, but our Covenant God will not suffer us to sink. He will choose His own time and means for accomplishing His purposes; perhaps we may be under a cloud for many years, but there will be relief at last. At evening time it shall be light.

To conclude. Are there any present who are conscious that they have not yet embraced the invitations of the gospel, and who have not gone as guilty sinners to the Saviour for pardon and peace? To such we would say—Tarry no longer. Hasten to the ark of mercy; others have fled to it and are safe. You will not be rejected. The promise stands on record unrepealed—“He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

JOSHUA DUNBAR.

LOVE, THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

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Galatians v. 22.—“*But the fruit of the Spirit is love.*”

—o—

THE great doctrine which the apostle discusses in this chapter, is Christian Liberty or freedom. The gospel proclaims deliverance from the yoke of bondage; and places

the believer in a state of freedom from the curse of the law and the irksome rites of the Jewish dispensation. But as there is an innate propensity in man to pervert the choicest blessings, St. Paul proceeds to shew on the one hand the deeds of the flesh, that is, of the depraved principle of our fallen nature, and the fruits of that divine influence of which all true Christians are subjects. The contrast between the respective works of the two agencies, is striking. The dispositions and feelings which are the spontaneous productions of the natural mind are sinful, vile, and destructive; on the other hand, the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. What a rich cluster of graces are these! What a bright assemblage of things lovely and of good report! Happy must be the heart in which these celestial elements prevail. *Love* is the first that claims our attention this morning.

I. This essential principle of the Christian character, varies according to its object; we shall therefore view it in its several relations and aspects.

1. With respect to the Deity, it may be regarded as *devout adoration*. This is the form in which it is developed. It is not familiarity—it is reverence and veneration and esteem and homage. It is the filial adoration of God as the great first cause of all things: the grand original and fountain of being; from whom all things animate and inanimate derived their existence, and on whom they are perpetually dependent. It is the warm and devout sentiment of the heart towards God as the parent of all good, the bountiful benefactor who scatters innumerable blessings around our path; to whom we are indebted for every breath we draw, and every comfort we enjoy. It is the enlightened feeling of veneration of Him who governs and upholds the universe; the adoration of His perfections and goodness. In Him every excellency meets and harmonizes. He is a God of inflexible justice, inviolable truth, immaculate

purity, and matchless grace. These perfections are so many expressions of His holiness; and hence the love of holiness is the love of God. And this holy reverence and admiration are mingled with a feeling of delight and complacency in the contemplation of His infinite benignity and grace. While combined with every instinct of care and homage, it is remote from timidity and trembling. It takes not the name of God in vain; it speaks not of the Deity in terms of familiarity and lightness of expression; but it is not servile nor slavish. It is the feeling of an affectionate child confiding in the wisdom and goodness of a father. It hath no abject fear, for "perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment."

2. Such is love to God. This grace of the Spirit viewed in relation to the Saviour, may be considered as *ardent gratitude* flowing from a sense of obligation. The doctrine of Scripture is clear on this head. We owe all our salvation to the work of Christ in His death and resurrection. But for His unsolicited interposition in becoming a man of sorrows, stooping to all the lowliness of poverty, the scoffings of the mocker, the malice of the selfish, and the agonies of the cross, the punishment to which we are all exposed as transgressors of the law of God, would have been inflicted upon us, and we should have been the subjects of wretchedness, and heirs of death without relief and without hope. The mediation of Jesus Christ has, however, set all believers free from the law of sin and death. The Bible tells us, that He has suffered the just for the unjust to bring us to God—that He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; that we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins; that whoever believeth in Him is justified freely against every charge of the law, and shall never fall into condemnation; and that if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Moreover through Him we have the animating prospect of eternal life. "Because I live, ye shall live also,"

are His own words of comfort and peace. And He lives to make intercession for us, saving to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. These are some of the grounds of our obligation to Him; and warm should be our gratitude, and unfaltering our confidence and love for such mercies as these.

3. Love with regard to our *fellow Christians*, may be regarded as *sincere esteem*, called forth by a perception of their love to Christ and fellowship in the gospel. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," is the testimony of an apostle. If we love Him that begat, we shall love those who are begotten by Him. There are many things which may provoke a controversy, stir up strife, and tend to alienate one Christian from another. But in proportion as we are under the power of the truth, and the influence of the Spirit we shall love all those who bear the marks of discipleship with Christ. Is this strange?—Is it not perfectly credible that those who have embraced the same great principles of truth—who believe in the same Saviour—who are animated by the same delightful hopes—who are travelling in the same path to the same abode of purity and peace—and who are destined to be associates for ever, should feel sentiments of sympathy and affection *now*? That love of which the Spirit is the Author, will overleap the barriers of party, and the minor shades of opinion in things non-essential. Wherever we recognize the image of Christ the heart that loves Him will open, and the affections flow forth. He that loveth God will love his brother also.

4. With respect to *mankind at large*, true Christian love assumes the form of *tender compassion*. No one who has the Spirit of Christ, but feels in some measure as He felt, when contemplating the misery and ruin of a world lying in wickedness. How often did He shed the sympathetic tear over human sorrow, and weep for the moral degradation of the species! To those in whom the same

mind dwells that dwelt in Him, a world deluded, grasping at trifles, pursuing shadows, unmindful of guilt and danger, and crowding the broad road that leads to destruction, presents a spectacle unspeakably affecting. How compassionate was the mind of St. Paul! When speaking of the wicked he said—"Of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. And this is a sample of that christian charity and right feeling which will be cherished by all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

II. Having thus endeavoured to explain the *nature*, let us now glance at the excellence of that love which is the fruit of the Spirit.

1. We may notice *the divinity of its origin*. "The carnal mind is enmity to God, and as such, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The deep seated aversion of the heart to the character and claims of God, must be destroyed ere love can be experienced. So long as man is left to himself, and is the slave of degenerate impulses, so long he remains a stranger to the exercise of the grace of love. No devout adoration of the Deity—no ardent gratitude to the Saviour—no sincere affection for His disciples—no tender compassion for mankind, will ever occupy his mind. A blind and narrow selfishness debases the spirit, and mars the beauty even of actions which are in themselves estimable and virtuous. Love therefore cannot originate with man. We must trace it to a higher source. It is the product of a heavenly influence, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit; the gift of Him whose name and nature is Love.

2. We remark, that love is an *operative principle*. It is the main-spring of obedience. It is not a fancy—a mere impulse, it is an active element. "If ye love me, keep my commandments;" give this proof of your love, says the Saviour. Without it, whatever may be our profession,

however accurate and extensive our knowledge of divine truth, however familiar we may be with the theory of the gospel, and however zealous we may be in its defence—

“If love to God and love to man
Be wanting, all our hopes are vain.”

“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity—that is love—it profiteth me nothing.” All our actions to be acceptable in the sight of heaven, must flow from this principle. Love to God and to man must form the governing motive of our lives.

3. Love is a *transforming element*. It assimilates the soul to Him from whom it comes. “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, for God is love.” It constitutes the essence of the Deity: the image of the Divine Being. The more we possess of this holy principle, the more we shall resemble Him who is the fountain of life. Heaven is the region where love abounds; its native place, where it is pure, perfect, ineffable. And hence it follows, the more deeply our minds are imbued with this celestial grace, the more shall we be fitted for the paradise above. It even now gives foretastes of that heavenly abode; it leads to communion with God; it renders the heart susceptible of the tenderest emotions, gives an elevation to the character, raises its possessor in the scale of beings and fits him to become the associate of the natives of the skies.

Finally. Love is an *immortal principle*—it “never faileth.” Faith and Hope are its associates on earth: and these three sister graces are appointed to accompany the Christian through all his earthly pilgrimage: to their guidance he surrenders himself, and they conduct him safely over Jordan to the land of Immanuel. Arrived there, faith and hope surrender their charge. They have accomplished their mission, and are no longer needed. But

charity enters within the veil, and abides with the happy inhabitant through eternity. On earth we require faith as the eye to guide us to Christ, and hope to cheer us onward in our chequered pilgrimage, but the kind offices of both will be over when once we reach the gates of the celestial city. Love, however, is a plant of paradise, it will then flourish as in its own native soil, and bloom with immortal verdure and sweetest fragrance in the presence of God.

DAVID R. AUSTIN.

THE PROMISED EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

Psalm lxxxix. 27.—“*I will make Him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth.*”

THERE can be no difficulty in determining to whom these words refer. The title, *first born*, is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament; and the promise in the text of regal dignity and elevation over the kings of the earth, can apply to none but Him. It accords with all the predictions of Scripture, and is borne out by facts in the history and life of our Lord. Thus spake the prophet Isaiah — “Behold my servant shall deal prudently. He shall be extolled, and exalted, and be very high.” In accordance with this, St. Paul tells us, that “God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow”—a homage higher than the kings of the earth ever received.

Let us therefore trace the exaltation of Christ in its *four successive stages*.

1. His humiliation closed in the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, and His exaltation there began. David prophesied of the Messiah, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." His *resurrection* was the first step to His unrivalled dignity. Peter, referring to the prophecy of David, testified before all the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "Him, whom ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." On the morning of the third day, our Lord burst the bonds of death, broke the bars of the grave, and came forth from the sepulchre full of Divine power. The guards fled: the disciples doubted the testimony of the women who had seen Him alive, until He came and stood in their presence with the welcome salutation—"Peace be unto you." To convince them that it was He himself, and not a disembodied spirit, He pointed to His pierced hands and feet, and partook of food before them. But Thomas, who was not present at this interview, refused to credit the report of his brethren, unless he could personally inspect the feet and the hands of his Lord. Eight days afterwards, the opportunity was afforded, and the unbelieving disciple acknowledged his conviction and exclaimed—"My Lord and my God." Thus the Saviour proved Himself by His resurrection, even to this incredulous disciple, to be "higher than the kings of the earth," and we, with Thomas, gladly acknowledge the "First-born from the dead" as our Lord and God, who will also awaken us from death, and give unto us eternal life: "for to this end He died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living."

2. The second step of His being "higher than the kings of the earth," is His ascension into glory. While in the act of blessing His disciples on Mount Olivet, "He was

parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." It is evident, from sundry expressions in the sacred history, that from the time of His resurrection, His body had become far more heavenly and spiritual than our earthly and material bodies. He could suddenly appear in the presence of His brethren, "the doors being shut," and in the same way, vanish before their sight. While it should seem, that the essential qualities of His humanity were not changed, yet at His ascension, through His Divine power, He was freed from the earth's attraction; and borne away from the sphere of its influence, He ascended to heaven, the boundless residence of the ever-present God. Yet though no longer visible to the eye of sense, He is still near His faithful servants. Elevated above mortal limits, He is notwithstanding with His friends wherever they need His aid, and thus fulfils His promise—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Hence we may learn, that the exaltation of our blessed Lord, contributes not only to His own glory, but to our salvation. We shall be where He is, and participate His bliss. He has ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things; and we may enjoy more of His presence even now, than was possible even to His friends and disciples before His session at the right hand of God. Thus we read, that "He ascended up on high, having led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men, even the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Thus the First-born is higher than the kings of the earth.

3. The third step in the Saviour's exaltation, is the position He fills in the heavenly world. John saw Him under the semblance of a lamb in the midst of the throne. The Scriptures declare, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in

this world, but also in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This agrees with Old Testament prophecy—"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The expressions of Scripture are not always to be taken in an absolutely literal sense. The right hand of God is not to be understood as meaning a particular place in heaven, but as expressive of the Almighty power and sovereignty of God by which He governs all things. By His ascension into heaven, the Saviour re-assumed His original authority, and entered upon His sovereign rule in connexion with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for the protection of His friends, and the destruction of His foes. In His hands are all the arrangements of Providence, and to Him we may with authorized confidence commit the keeping of our soul in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. And now, seeing we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with our infirmities, but who when on earth was tempted in all points like as we are, we may come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.

4. The fourth and last step in the exaltation of Christ, is His coming again to judgment. His own words are, "The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory ; and before Him shall be gathered all nations." He had appeared once in the world in deep abasement, and under the form of a servant ; His next appearance will be in supreme majesty and glory. Once He was Himself judged in weakness ; but at His second coming He will judge the world in power. Each step in His exaltation has a corresponding step in His state of humiliation. His resurrection—His ascension—His session at the right hand of God, and His second coming to judgment, all had their

counterpart in His death, His descent into the grave, His poverty, and His first advent in the flesh. On earth He was seen as a poor infant in the manger ; but now, when He shall appear to judge the world in righteousness, all the nations of the earth shall bow before Him. When that event will occur is not revealed, but whenever it may be, it will lay the world in ruins. The noble fabric of our earthly system will be shaken to its foundation, the pomp and wealth of terrestrial glory shall fade, and the world pass away. Then the mysterious mazes of the Providence of God will be unravelled, and the perplexities which we feel in the aspect of His moral government, be clearly unfolded, and the wisdom, love, and mercy which pervaded all His conduct, will shine illustriously before men and angels. *Then* shall be enacted the great counterpart of His humiliation and death. Then will He, the first begotten from the dead, be higher than the kings of the earth. When He was *here* in His incarnate state, He was the victim of malice, hatred, and scorn: *now* He occupies the throne of the universe, and His enemies shall lick the dust. *Here* He stood arraigned at the bar of a heathen governor, and His innocence was sworn away by perjured witnesses whom the Jews suborned for the wicked purpose : but *then*, His accusers shall stand in His presence, and the assembled world shall be marshalled at His feet. To a world clothed in the mantle of midnight, how inconceivably awful will be the ushering in of that auspicious morn with the sound of archangel's trumpet, and the rising of the dust of sleeping millions !

No finite mind can form a full idea of such a scene. The subject is too vast for the contemplative powers of mortal man. The imposing spectacle of the congregated population of the globe—all that ever have trodden or ever shall tread, on its surface, are concerned in its import, and involved in its issues. Its mighty sweep shall gather ever human soul: and, then when every one shall have given an account of himself

to God the Judge eternal—one awful conflagration will consume the present world, from the ashes of which will arise a new heaven and a new earth. One question each of us should this hour put to himself—"Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?"

HENRY B. SOULE.

THE SECOND ADVENT.

1 Cor. iii. 13.—*The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

THESE words describe the scene that shall take place at the second coming of our blessed Lord. To that sublime event the Scriptures frequently direct our attention. They tell us of the difference between His first and His second appearance. In the former He came in a state of great humility and lowliness—and for our sakes became so poor that He had not where to lay His head: in the latter, He will come with power and great glory, attended by all His holy angels. In the one He came in much obscurity, in the other He will publicly appear, and every eye shall see Him.

It is the latter manifestation to which the text refers. When He will come, whether five hundred or a thousand years hence, we know not, as the word of God is silent upon that point. It is said that He will come *suddenly*, even "in such an hour as ye think not." Most important therefore is it to be always in a state of preparation, "with our loins girded and our lamps burning," lest that day come upon us unawares. And when "the great

and terrible day of the Lord" shall come, as come it must, the heavens shall melt with fervent heat, and the universal conflagration shall commence. Then "every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

I. Let us consider the solemn truth here announced—"Every man's work shall be made manifest, and the fire shall try it."

Much diminished in awfulness would this subject be, if there were any possibility of our being able to conceal deeds of darkness from the all piercing eye of our heavenly Judge. In earthly courts, the greatest criminals sometimes escape through some flaw in the indictment, or some informality in the proceedings, or from want of direct and positive evidence, as to the actual perpetration of the offence—but in the great assize of the world, there will be no possibility of evasion by any technicality, or defect. We shall not be judged by fallible man. He that sitteth on the throne before which we must appear, is the Omniscient heart-searching God, "who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it." It shall be declared to all the angelic intelligences to the spirits of just men made perfect, to the countless millions encircling the throne of the Most High, to every created being both good and bad, and all will acknowledge the *justice* of God in the sentence of death passed upon the impenitent, and His *mercy* in the salvation of those who are found in Christ, and justified by faith in His blood.

"The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." The fire here referred to, is doubtless that which shall attend the consummation of all things at the close of the world. That this globe shall be destroyed by fire, and that the solemnities

of the judgment shall be ushered in by a universal conflagration is fully and most distinctly revealed. The burning fires of that day, shall display the character of every man's work, as fire sheds light on all around, and discloses hidden objects. It is also the property of fire to test their qualities. Thus gold and silver, so far from being destroyed by fire, are purified from dross. Wood, hay, stubble, are consumed.

We must not, however, misunderstand the nature and import of this statement. It is not to be inferred, that the material fire of the last day will purify the soul, or destroy that which is unsound : the idea is, that the investigations and trials of the judgment shall declare what we are, whether genuine or dross, as fire acts with reference to gold and silver. That day—the great and terrible day of the Lord—shall shew what is good and what is bad.

I would, brethren, ere I proceed, most earnestly impress on you, the necessity of seriously considering this awful subject. Seriously examine yourselves and impartially try the question by the test of Scripture, whether you are in Christ or no. What says conscience? Is there any besetting sin that you allow to govern you? Does pride, or lying, or swearing, or drunkenness, or lust, or envy, or strife, or malice, or anger, or revenge, or covetousness, or unbelief, or hypocrisy, or evil speaking, predominate in your heart? — Whichever of these sinful passions may be detected on a close and on an impartial examination—crucify it, and cast it out. It is to the soul what Agag was to Saul. If it be spared, it will rise up against you on the last great day, and be a swift witness to your inevitable and eternal condemnation.

The Lord Jesus Christ, is an all-sufficient Saviour—and saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. But He will not save those who do not believe, and embrace Him by faith, who do not walk after the Spirit, but after the

flesh, and who live and who die with unmortified appetites and unsanctified hearts. God is holy, and we are expressly told, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

II. Let us now proceed to consider, *How*, or in what way the trial will be made.

St. Paul, having spoken of Christ as the foundation of the Christian life and system, gives the important caution—"Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it." There are, it appears from this statement, two classes of persons who build on the sure foundation, though the materials of the superstructure they raise, are of a very different character. The first class consists of those who build upon the sure foundation, gold, silver, and precious stones," substances which will endure the test of the fire. The meaning is, they receive and believe nothing but what is in strict accordance with the oracles of God. Their doctrines are sound and scriptural, drawn from the pure wells of salvation, and unadulterated with the inventions and conceits of erring, fallible man.

But who are the other class—the builders of "wood, hay, stubble," materials, that will fall before the fiery element, and perish in its flames? They are those who imbibe erroneous and unscriptural doctrines, who, while they preach Christ crucified, so disguise and mix up with crude fancies and opinions the grand articles of the Christian faith, and so corrupt and adulterate them with human tradition, and the rubbish of human inventions, that the bright beams of the gospel are dimmed and diverted, and as far as man's agency can go, tend to make the cross of Christ of none effect. Yet, while these works, thus figuratively represented, shall be burned, and the builder suffer loss, "he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." This is to say—if his doctrines have been unsound, or dis-

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figured by admixtures of worldly opinions, if he has had mistaken views of piety, nourished feelings which he thought were those of religion, and superadded to the truth observances, practices, penances, and forms which the truth as it is in Christ does not require, however well meant and conscientious, he shall suffer loss. The phrase here is literally—"he shall be mulcted"—a law term that signifies, he shall be fined, and suffer detriment. What that loss may be, the day will declare. It has been supposed that it means, that while this man shall be saved, the effects of his errors and mistakes will be, that he will occupy a lower rank in heaven than he would have enjoyed had he adhered to the gold, silver, and precious stones of the pure gospel of Christ. Thus compared with what he expected, he might be said to suffer loss.

This is a point we cannot hope to comprehend in our present state of existence. It will be an infinite mercy to be saved at all, though it be with fire.—That is, as if the action of fire had passed over us, or with the difficulty of a man escaping from the flames when his house is in a blaze.

Permit me then, my brethren, to urge upon you once more, the solemn and impartial examination of your state before God. If they are saved as by a fire, whose errors are those of doctrine merely, who yet build on the only foundation—where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? Solemnly would I warn you, that unless you build on Christ, and become His disciples, there is no escape. The fire that consumes the dross, while it displays the precious metal, will destroy those in whom there is no soundness in the faith. May the consideration of these things make us meet for the day of God!

R. BUSNELL.

DEPRESSION AND RESOLVE.

Psalm xlii. 6.—“*O my God, my soul is cast down within me : therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Misar.*”

THE occasion on which this Psalm was written, was a very memorable era in David's life and reign. His son Absalom conspired against him. The people of Jerusalem in large numbers, sided with the ungrateful youth, and the royal father was obliged to seek safety in flight. With such followers as the emergency permitted him to bring together, he passed over the brook Hedron, and turning his face towards the northern frontier of his kingdom, he hastened onwards and halted not, till he was in safe hiding among the gorges and mountain fastnesses of Lebanon. There, doubtless, with his faithful attendants, it was anxiously debated what steps had best been taken to quell the insurrection and recover the throne. But the time was not all spent in deliberations of this sort, important as they were. No sooner did an opportunity offer, than David hasted away to his mountain chamber, there to snatch an hour of communion with God. Let us follow him to his retreat. In a deep valley of Hermon, through which rolls a refreshing stream, buried amid the thick shadows which the trees and rocks fling around, sits the monarch of Israel, his soul, like the hunted hart panting after the water brooks, thirsting for God. There is the life and power of religion here. This is not the cold form. In no way does the inwrought piety of the heart, make itself more evident than in its strong desire for communion with God. The cares, the pleasures, even the duties of life, may

at times abate the ardour of our heaven-ward aspirations, but if we are born from above, we shall come back to our rest in God. While the vessel floats idly and easily on the tide, the winds dead around it, it has no occasion to shew its strength; but when the tempest breaks out, and the long rolling surge comes sweeping on to overwhelm it, then is seen on what its safety depends. While his toys are in his hands the child may seem to forget every thing else, but if these are taken from him and his infantile amusement be destroyed, to whose arms can he run, or on whose bosom can he lean but that of a parent? So it is with the Christian. His afflictions do not create his piety, they simply develope it more fully.

I. My text expresses David's heavy and distressing complaint. "O my God, my soul is cast down within me:" One cause of his depression, was the recollection of better days that were now passed away. "I had gone with the multitude," says the weeping king, "I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me." A monarch driven from his kingdom, is likely to carry many painful and sorrowful reflections with him into his exile; but a patriot driven from his country, and a saint driven from the sanctuary, are likely to carry with them still tenderer and holier recollections. Of these the heart of David was now full; but they were the remembrances not of the exiled monarch but of the banished believer. He does not say, "Ah! these were happy days when I wore my crown and sat in peace in my palace. The courtiers thronged my gates, and hosts were marshalled at my word. But now, stripped of my crown and kingdom, a poor outcast and fugitive, deserted by my friends, my life sought by my own son, I have nothing left me but to sit and weep by this mountain brook." It was impossible that he could forget these scenes in his life, but his thoughts rested not on them. It was on

the Sabbaths he had enjoyed in the land of Sabbaths. In those days the ark dwelt in a tent, but beneath its humble roof David had seen the power and the glory of God; and his present privation was the bitterest ingredient in his cup of grief. When laid aside from public worship, and unable to go into the courts of the Lord, let the thought of that blessed hour sustain our heart, when with songs and everlasting joy, we shall enter that heavenly sanctuary, out of whose sacred portals no enemy shall ever drive us to wander more.

But this was a heavy complaint—"my soul is cast down within me." Sad it is, indeed, when there is life only in the body. It is a gloomy condition when the soul, which is the man himself, is slain with grief. When there is no more spirit within us, and hope, the anchor of the heart, is almost gone. It is sad when the sorrows of to-day, in our apprehension, are to give place only to the heavier troubles of to-morrow, and there is no relief breaking through the dark cloud in the heavens above us. But the eye of faith is dim—the cloud is not so thick after all. It extends but a little way around us. Let us take the wings of faith and soar above it. Why should we languish in the dungeon of Despair? Have we not a key that can open, as did that of John Bunyan's pilgrims, these doors of iron? Yes, here it is. "I will remember *Thee*." So saying David was himself again.

II. This is the second branch of our subject—the resolution of his heart. He thought on the Fountain of Life, and his soul revived. Thoughts of God to a devout mind are special restoratives; they give strength to the weak, elevation to the depressed, life to the dead. Who would like to remain in prison when the door is opened for his deliverance? Is the believer cast down? Let him remember God—what He may already have done for him, and what He has promised to do. When the soul feels the death-chill of despondency, the thoughts of a gracious God

will again warm and quicken it into life. When Peter turned his eye from Christ to the waves, he began to sink, but prayer to his Lord lifted him from the deep.

It had been the pious practice of Israel's monarch, to remember God on his bed, and to meditate upon Him in the night-watches. He could look forth from the window of his palace, and mark well 'the bulwarks of Zion. He was now far away from these symbols of God's presence, in a dry and thirsty land where no springs of living water, no ordinances of religious worship, were enjoyed. But he was bound to no external rites. In the ravine and the glen, the waving forests and by the bubbling brook, he would hold communion with God. The man who can only worship in one place, would have been hard put to, if in David's circumstances. He would want his allegorical building, with its altar of stone and its lighted tapers, and its symbolical coverings and devices, and in the absence of these he could not worship. But the king of Israel was a Christian before the Christian era. He could hold devout communion with Heaven, and offer prayer and praise in the land of the Hermonites and in the rock-shaded sides of Lebanon, equally as on the heights of Zion. He had anticipated the words of the Saviour in their sacred and essential import—"The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem worship the Father. For where two or three shall be gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

"Where'er we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is holy ground."

The stream of the Jordan bounded the land of promise, and David was now on the other side of that stream. The Israelite reckoned it no ordinary calamity to be banished from his country. When compelled to pass beyond its boundaries, he felt himself an exile; and as having no longer a claim to the blessings promised to the seed of

Abraham. This was now David's lot. He did not at the time before us, dwell on dust which to him was sacred ; sacred because of the oath and covenant of the Lord, and as the place where patriarchs had wandered, and where their ashes reposed. He was not far from that land, it is true ; he had only to look across the stream, and there were the verdant plains, and the richly wooded heights of northern Galilee ; and stretching away from the margin of the lake, and bounding the view on the south, was the ridge of the Samaritan hills, which shut out from the monarch's views, the sight of Mount Zion. But though not far beyond the bounds of the Land of Promise, he was not actually within them. His enemies had chased him to a foreign soil, and compelled him to seek refuge among the inhabitants of Hermon. But it was his happiness that they could not drive him where God was not. The idols of the heathen had the earth partitioned among them. Each was supreme within his own territory, but his power extended not beyond it. But David worshipped Jehovah, the every where present and Omniscient One, who filleth heaven and earth. Should he dwell in the uttermost regions of the globe, should he be banished to regions so remote, that the light of no star had ever travelled thither, there he would be with God. It is the terror of the wicked man—he cannot escape : it is the joy of the righteous—he cannot be driven away from the presence of his Creator and Saviour. All God's saints upon earth are in a distant land, yet they may look towards their home, and believe that in due time they will be there. If we thus think upon the future, the hard usage we may meet with by the way will give us little concern.

My brethren let us learn some practical lessons from the scenes we have now reviewed. Let us see from them, that no situation in life is without trial and danger—but that under the heaviest calamity we must not yield to despair. “Hope thou in God,” must be our motto in every scene.

We may see the difference between the man of God, and

the wicked. The scene before us is a portrait of all God's children. It is easy to part with those for whom we care nothing: but to part from those to whom we are attached by every tie of pure affection is a hard task. "Entreat me not to leave thee," was the language of Ruth. When God commanded Cain to retire, he took Him at His word. He never loved God, or he would have lain in the dust till his crime was covered and his sin pronounced by the lips of Divine Mercy. It cost him little pain to part, but Jacob, and David, and Daniel, would not let God go in the day of calamity. This is a test of piety.

JOHN SCOTT.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

Ephesians ii. 5.—"*By grace are ye saved.*"

ST. PAUL was largely indebted to redeeming love; and like all other debtors to that love, he was so far from being ashamed of the debt, that he thankfully owned the obligation it laid upon him; and he exulted in it as his happiness, his honour, his glory. Fully convinced, that in his former opposition to the gospel of Christ he ignorantly courted ruin, and rushed with mad precipitation upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, he gratefully commemorates that unexampled grace which sprung from the highest heavens, arrested him in his career of impiety, unmasked him to himself, revealed to him the Saviour. This grace is the affecting and dignified theme which melts his heart, elevates his powers and tunes his tongue to praise. Full of

the subject, while discussing the great change which the same gracious power had effected in the converts to Christianity at Ephesus, he pauses to remind them, that by grace they were saved. And further on he repeats and amplifies the precious doctrine. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."

Grace, evidently denotes free favour. It is a strong and impressive word. *Mercy*, is kindness shewn to the *misérable*; *grace*, is mercy shewn to the *worthless*. *Faith*, in its general acceptation, is reliance upon testimony. The faith of a Christian—that faith from which he obtains the honourable denomination of a *believer*, is the cordial reception of the record which God hath given of his Son, upon the credit of His own veracity. Let us then meditate upon the blessing here exhibited—the source from which it originates—and upon the instrument by which we are instated in its possession.

I. The blessing is *salvation*. This is a blessing of large and joyous extent. It implies deliverance from guilt—reconciliation with God—the restoration of our nature—and an unalienable right to eternal life.

It confers deliverance from *guilt*. The punishment to which our fallen nature is liable, is commonly styled the penalty of the law. It is death in the widest signification of the term. It is the just award of sin, for "the wages of sin is death." With this death Adam was threatened in case of disobedience. He fell; and as he stood in a federal character, all his posterity fell with him under the denunciation of the law. Our deplorable condition is that we are by nature children of wrath. But the salvation of the gospel delivers us from this terrible woe. It dissolves our connexion with the law as the ground of eternal life; it bestows upon us a justifying righteousness which the Law-giver will accept as unblemished; since the Father hath

made his Son to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Hence follows *reconciliation*. This invaluable blessing was typified by all the expiatory sacrifices of the law, and by all the rites of the Levitical economy. This great and immeasurable privilege, Christ, the Author of eternal redemption has obtained. We are told that "He hath made peace by the blood of His cross"—"reconciliation for iniquity"—and that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." By virtue of this reconciliation, we can view with calmness the high demands of the violated law, and look forward with confidence to the tribunal of the Judge eternal. Thus reconciled, we who were once afar off, are brought nigh unto God, and joy in him through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.

The *restoration* of our nature is included in salvation. This, termed in Scripture, the renewal in the Spirit of our minds, and the being created anew in Christ Jesus, consists in the recovery of the moral excellence which we have lost in Adam. We read that the "new man is, after God, created in knowledge," that he may discern the true end of his being: in "righteousness," not that which justifies the sinner: but that which forms in believers a part of their Father's image. The former is imputed—the latter implanted. The one is without us—the other within us. It is, properly speaking, a rectitude of nature: a rectitude which expresses and exerts itself in sanctified acts and habits; and these are what the apostle calls true holiness. Holiness is as much the element of the new nature, as sin is the element of the old. Sin has no longer the dominion it once had. The Christian is being gradually prepared for heaven, the abode of innocence, purity, and love. There this salvation will terminate in a fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore.

II. The text expressly declares whence a salvation so great, so invaluable, so divine, proceeds. "By grace are

ye saved." So saith the apostle. This is the invariable doctrine of the Bible. Salvation is of the Lord, and therefore it is by grace, Grace in all its lineaments and essence.

1. The *origin* of salvation is vainly ascribed to any other cause. There is not, in the oracles of God, a point ascertained with more precision, nor corroborated with testimonies more frequent and conclusive, than this. "I will have mercy" said the Lord to Moses, "on whom I will have mercy," so that St. Paul draws the obvious inference—"It is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." We hence see that it is of grace in its commencement. Are we justified? It is freely by His grace. Are we regenerated? According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Are we pardoned? I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgression for mine own sake. Are we adopted? We have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father.

2. And if salvation has its origin in grace, it must *proceed by grace*. As the new creature is of heavenly birth, no food can suit it but that which is supplied by the gracious Spirit. The prodigal may feed on his husks, the formalist on ritualism—the Pharisee on his good works, but the soul born from above, must receive food suited to his new and spiritual life. It is from the fulness of Christ that we derive grace for grace. It is by His Spirit that we are strengthened with all might in the inner man. It is by Him that we fight the good fight of faith, and are more than conquerors. In a word, it is God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. And the *completion* of our salvation is equally of grace. He who begins the good work, performs it until the day of Jesus Christ. He hath given to us eternal life. The inheritance of believers is an inheritance already purchased. The full price was paid by their Surety, and it is

kept by the faithfulness of God, till they become of age, when they shall enter into its full possession amidst the plaudits of angels and the congratulations of the redeemed around the celestial throne.

III. As the great salvation in all its parts is the offspring of gratuitous bounty, so the manner in which we acquire a property in its benefits, corresponds to its nature. We therefore remark, that the means or instrument by which salvation becomes ours is *faith*. Reading the eighth verse in connection with the text, we have it thus explained—“By grace are ye saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” Genuine faith, is a cordial assent to the testimony of God, and a firm reliance upon His faithfulness and love. Thus Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. The love of God purposes Christ Jesus as the propitiation for sin, as the peace maker between God and man, as the only foundation of our hope and confidence. Eternal truth has sworn that no sinner, be his character what it may, if he flee to the cross, shall ever be rejected. “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,” is the distinct and unrepealed declaration of the Divine Redeemer. It is an ample warrant to believe, embrace, trust the salvation of the soul to His hands.

Nor is this all. That the apostle may mark, with an indelible stain, the pride of all human glory, he takes care to inform us that even this faith by which we receive Christ Jesus the Lord, does not originate in our will ; neither is it effected by our power. It is the gift of God. The whole Scripture is decisive on this head. It is given us to believe in Christ. It is God who deals the measure of faith. It is He who fulfils in His people, the work of faith with power. We thus see, in every feature and in every part of the gospel, that it offers to the truly penitent an absolutely free and full salvation.

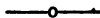
Many important and weighty suggestions rise up before

us in the application of this subject. We mention only two. *First*, it encourages our hope in the pursuit of eternal salvation. Grace reigns ! Before the tribunal of God, all are guilty: and therefore, before the throne of grace, all are on a level. At this throne by which we are introduced to the favour of Jehovah, there is no respect of persons. The rigid Pharisee and the rapacious publican—the severe moralist and the abandoned sinner, must all sue for mercy ; and if saved at all, be saved by grace, without money and without price. “I,” says the Son of God—“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

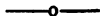
And let this subject, *secondly*, quicken the believer in his way to glory. Is salvation in its *origin*, its *progress*, its *completion* of grace? Why then should our hands be weak, or our souls cast down? In every trial, in every danger, we are authorized to come boldly to our Father’s throne, and to ask at once, with the affection and confidence of children, for all the benefits which we need. Who then shall hinder us from arriving in due course at the heavenly Canaan? Kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation, we shall one day appear before Him in Zion. Let us, therefore, “gird up the loins of our mind, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus.”

DR. JOHN MASON.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.



Romans iii. 27, 28.—“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”



THERE is no question of deeper importance to man, than that which relates to his final acquittal in the day of judg-

ment. The gospel is distinguished by many striking features, which form a material difference between it and those which human ingenuity has framed. Among these, the doctrine of justification by faith stands directly forward.

This is the doctrine which the apostle is explaining and enforcing in this chapter: and the doctrine is the life-blood, the distinctive element of the Christian system. It constitutes, in connexion with the atonement, the grand peculiarity of the New Testament religion. It was the especial point in the reformation from Popery. Luther often called this doctrine of justification by faith the article on which the Church stands when the doctrine is maintained in its purity; and on which it falls when it is repudiated and set aside by the preacher and the people.

It will therefore be our object in the present occasion to explain and apply the statement in the text—namely, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

L. Our first enquiry is—*What is meant by Justification?* It is a word borrowed from the profession of the law. In its primary sense it involves the idea of accusation. If there be no charge brought against a person, he does not stand in need of being justified: but if accused of crime of which he is entirely innocent, he thence has an opportunity of making his innocence appear, and thus justifying himself; and his judge has also an opportunity of justifying him by pronouncing or declaring publicly that he is not guilty of the crimes laid to his charge.

This is the literal meaning of the term. It is therefore evident, that in this sense no flesh living can be justified. God is the Judge of all: and all the human race in all ages and in all nations are criminals in His presence, accused by the law, by the whole tenor of Scripture, and by their individual conscience. We are not, then, in a position to plead — “not guilty.” We are transgressors, miserable offenders: and if we are ever treated as innocent, it will not be because we are actually and truly so, since that is not

the case, but it will be on account of the innocence, the obedience, the merit of another imputed to us. If we are justified, it will be for the sake of the Redeemer, that is to say, on account of His unerring fulfilment of the law being made over to our deliverance from the condemnation in which our sins had involved us.

This plain statement of the case is disapproved by many, perhaps for these reasons, that like the Jews in our Saviour's time, they are ignorant of the purity of the divine law, of the imperfection of their own obedience, and which is still more fatal, because the doctrine is humbling to the innate pride of the heart. Man does not like to be told that all his good deeds, his prayers, his penitence, his attendance upon public worship, and his integrity in the ordinary duties and business of life, leave him a sinner still, and furnish him with no title to the kingdom of heaven. He does not like to be told, that his noblest deeds, his most virtuous and benevolent actions, when weighed against the immutable claims of eternal justice are too defective, too stained and polluted, too short and imperfect to purchase life and immortality. The Christian whose conduct has been most uniformly correct, cannot presume to lift his hand to heaven, and claim an inheritance with the sanctified there on the ground of moral worth. This is the teaching of the Old Testament no less than of the New. The Israelites were not allowed to ascribe the possession of Canaan to their own goodness. They were to acknowledge the mercy of God in bringing them to its shores, and giving them the occupancy of the country over the residents. "In the Lord they had righteousness and strength;" and the pious of that day, looked forward through types and sacrifices to the future Messiah as "the Hope of Israel, and the Saviour thereof," as Christians have ever, from the earliest period to the present, looked back to Him as crucified and slain for the redemption of the world.

Such then is justification. It is of God, and imports His

acquitting us from guilt, by a free and full remission of sin: His justice accepting a competent satisfaction offered in lieu of the debt due to Him, by reason of which the debtor is discharged from punishment and dealt with as righteous.

II. But how, on our part, does this become our's? The text tells us—and the Scripture uniformly tells us, that it is by *faith*. What is faith? It is a word of many meanings, yet its use, wherever the doctrine before us is concerned, may be easily understood. It is more than simple belief—more believing the truth of Scripture—more than even a spirit of reverence towards God. There may be all these, and yet not the faith which justifies. Faith in Christ consists in a simple reliance on Him for salvation. It is sometimes termed faith in His name—in His blood—in His righteousness; implying a sense of unworthiness and insufficiency in ourselves, and a depending upon what the Saviour has done and suffered for our pardon and acceptance. It is, so to speak, the *eye* that beholds the Lamb of God—the *ear* that listens anxiously and devoutly to His word—the *hand* which is stretched out to receive the blessing which the Scriptures promise—the *foot* that runs with delight in the way of God's commandments—the *heart* that embraces and loves the Saviour, and confides in Him for all saving purposes. This is no meritorious act, since faith itself is the gift of God.

This then is the faith that justifies. How? I answer, by leading the believer to look to Christ, and to repose all his dependence upon His grace and mercy. By this single act, a transfer is made of the sins of the individual to Christ, and of the righteousness of Christ to him. He thus becomes justified. He has put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and is no longer under the law as the ground of life, but under grace.

If we consult the Scriptures, and take them in their plain and obvious signification, we shall find ample confirmation of this statement. One passage in the verses preceding my

text, is of itself sufficient. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, the he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." One inference from this is obvious. *Faith does not procure justification.* It is the meritorious, the all-sufficient, the everlasting righteousness of the Lord Jesus, that does this: while faith accepts it as freely bestowed, and so far as man is concerned, wholly undeserved.

III. Our last enquiry is—what are the *effects* of this doctrine? Some affirm that it has a gloomy aspect upon the interests of holiness and virtue. If this can be proved—if because we are saved through faith, and not by the works of the law—it can be shewn that this doctrine has a tendency to foster licentiousness, and that those who espouse it are less moral and virtuous than those who rejected it—then would the doctrine bear the stamps of its condemnation on its brow. But how stands the case? A criminal sentenced to die, may be wicked enough to insult the benefactor that brings him a pardon, though this would be a rare occurrence, yet it cannot be the case with a pardoned sinner.

What saith the Scripture? It describes man both as *guilty* and *depraved*. The former is done away by the atonement of Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. The law has no more any power to condemn the soul that has embraced the Redeemer. But now see the connexion between deliverance from guilt and the sanctification of our moral nature. The two blessings are combined. Where there is pardon there is the renewing of the spirit of the mind. The man becomes a new creature. He is passed from death unto life: and has his fruit unto holiness. "The

righteousness of Christ," observes an old writer, "is not a fine robe upon a filthy back." The wearer is washed and sanctified as well as justified. He has put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness after the image of Him that created him.

There may be some persons here who almost totally disregard religion, and disclaim alike its doctrines and duties. I would, in conclusion, seriously urge you to consider your state before God. Are you votaries of pleasure? Are you devoted to the world? Reflect, I beseech you, that there is another world than this: a world of eternal blessedness for the justified, and of endless misery for the unrighteous! Now you may obtain pardon and salvation through the blood of the Redeemer, since these are freely offered to all who turn to the Lord, and trust in the merits of his Son. You have no refuge to which you can resort, but that which is open to you by the cross of Christ; and laying hold on that, you will be safe. In accents of love the gospel says to all who tremblingly ask, "what must I do to be saved?—Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

J. E. EVERITT.

CHRISTIAN EFFORT FOR THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Nehemiah ii. 18.—"*Let us rise up and build.*"

HAD not Nehemiah risen up to the work, the people would not have built. Had he loitered, he might as well have

remained in Persia. The office of a minister is solemn and of unequalled importance. If ever the songs of Zion are to be brought down to earth, the ministers of the sanctuary must begin the concert, and prolong the praise. Their prayers, their examples, their contributions, their thrilling appeals, and their unwearied labours, must stand in the foremost rank of every successful enterprise. If the church is ever to reach the summit of her glory, all her members of every name, grade, and position, must make much nearer approaches to holiness, zeal, and devotedness to God, than have been witnessed since the days of the apostles.

Among the things most wanted in the present day in order to "build," and extend the kingdom of God, we mention the following.

1. *The prayer of faith.* As the period approacheth when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters the sea, the efficacy of prayer is to be most gloriously illustrated. The prophets have foretold, that this event is to be brought about, in answer to prayer. But it must be no formal prayer. It must be the prayer of faith, of earnestness, of strong supplication, such as is expressed by St. Paul—"the Spirit itself making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Before every revival of religion there is a spirit of prayer for this influence, that never was, and never will be disappointed. It is attended with a sense of absolute dependence on God, and with an earnest and diligent use of means that nothing can repel. It is marked with deep humility and self-loathing, and with an awful sense of backsliding. The prosperity of the church is waiting on the clouds for such intercession to bring it down. The world is waiting in the regions of death for such prayers to call it forth.

2. Christians must give more of their *property to Christ*. The Hebrews were required by their laws to give at least four-tenths of their income to the cause of religion. Alas! what a difference now! There is many a professed mem-

ber of the Church, and of orthodox creed, who while he would expend upon himself in the gratification of his sinful passions pounds upon pounds, would not give a shilling to save a soul from hell ! The perdition of the world is nothing to him, if he can indulge his appetites in the lusts of the flesh. On this subject the mass of avowed Christians seem scarcely to have learned the first letters of the moral alphabet. Immense treasures are wanted to convert the world ; and before such a conversion can be accomplished, every professed disciple of the Saviour must hold himself a steward, ready to deliver his goods whenever his Lord shall call for them.

3. Christians must *consecrate* not only property but *themselves* to the work of the Lord. In past ages, since the days of the apostles, few have had the moral courage and heart to say—"I prosper, if the kingdom of Christ prospers," The larger proportion of mankind who acknowledge themselves the servants of God, have never "risen up to build" the walls of Zion, in true earnest. They have gone down to the grave, satisfied with leaving the world as it respects the triumphs of the gospel, just as they found it. There are still religious drones, who make no returns to God for the bread they eat as His daily gift. But the Church must awake. There must be a vigorous impulse at the heart that will drive the streams of life through the extremities. Christians must hold their powers of body and mind—their time, influence, and property, as devoted to God. They must lay all their plans of business, of expenditure, of relaxation, with a supreme reference to the glory of Christ, and go forth determined that the world shall be the better and happier for their having lived in it.

This is to "arise and build." This is to be epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. This is the high and glorious course on which I would invite you to enter. And now for the reasons.

1. The object is of *infinite value*. It is nothing less

than the glory of God before the universe, and the translation of millions of souls from eternal pollution and torment to everlasting blessedness. A thousand ages hence, the redeemed spirits around the throne of heaven, will not have learnt the peerless value of that salvation you are invited to share, and to disseminate around. By prayer and holy effort, you may be the means of saving millions of immortal beings who might otherwise perish; and of filling the world with the richest glory of redeeming love.

2. We should arise and work for God, on the *ground of creation*. He made us what we are, and placed us in our respective stations, that we should serve Him. He demands our heart and soul, and has never given us a right to live to ourselves, not for a day or hour. We are not our own—we are His creatures. We have no right to live in a world that belongs to Him, if we will not serve Him. What right have we to walk His earth, and breathe His air, if we withhold from Him the homage He requires? This world is full of God. We see Him, hear Him, feel Him in all things. No other being has preserved us, watched over us night and day, clothed and fed us. And all this that we might love and serve Him. His tender mercies have filled our lives.

3. My brethren, we ought to arise and work, *because the blessed Redeemer has died to redeem us*, and to raise us to the honours of the sons of God. We are bought with a price: and we have no permission to defraud the Saviour of His purchase. And what do we not owe Him for coming to seek us when we were wandering from the fold of God? When we were on the verge of perdition, He threw around us the arms of everlasting love, and made us fellow heirs with the saints and of the household of God.

My brethren, let us anticipate the judgment of posterity. We are approaching an age when men will be devoted to God as their fathers never were; an age of action, of enterprise, of liberality, of which, in their indolent and selfish repose, former generations had no conception. This is to

be the character of the whole church as it never was before. It will be the principle and habit of society. The sordid being who lives for himself, will be marked and shunned as a swindler is now. A new era will have commenced. New scenes of generosity will be unfolded.

We live, brethren, in a world which has been distinguished from all other worlds as the theatre of redemption : selected by the Deity for the scene of those amazing exhibitions of grace which are to carry a report to the most distant parts of creation, and to illumine and astonish the universe. Open your eyes in a clear evening on the starry heavens ; and when you have filled your wondering view with the numberless worlds which float in boundless space, you will stand astonished that this planet, now reduced to a speck, has been selected to hold so conspicuous a place in the universe of God, to be a point whence shall radiate a light to illumine all worlds in the knowledge of His glory.

The time will come when the whole intelligent creation will gaze with the most intense interest upon the transactions which are now taking place on this earth. And when the inhabitants of the most distant world on that side of heaven shall hold high consultation with the inhabitants of the most distant world on the other side of heaven, and both the one and the other shall be lost in amazement at the events which have taken place on our little globe, every redeemed spirit will exult in having been permitted to take a part in bringing forward these supreme wonders of the universe !

We have the infinite privilege to live in a world where a church, founded in the blood of its Divine Head, is training many sons for glory—to live among the records and memorials of the most astonishing facts that ever commanded the admiration of intelligent beings. Amidst these stupendous operations which are to echo through the entire range of unnumbered worlds, we have our existence. We are among the multitude whose efforts are to consummate the work of

redemption; and to send out a report through planets, stars, and constellations to the remotest region of space, to prolong the echoes of redeeming mercy through eternity. In this moral laboratory of the universe shall we be idle? Let them sleep in Mercury, in Saturn, in Jupiter, in Herschel, but let us not slumber in a work like this! It is our lot to live in a favoured period. We find Christendom teeming with institutions and projects for promoting the kingdom of Christ—shall we not rise up and build? If we will not do this, we ought to get back, as best we may, to the dark ages of the world; we belong not to the present period.

O my brethren, to what a birthright are we born! Under what a pressure of responsibility do we lie! What a voice of authority comes down from heaven! What appeals are made to our conscience, our gratitude, our compassion! What calls come in from the four quarters of the globe to awaken our undrooping, undying zeal! By the joys of one world and the miseries of two—by the compassions and blood of a dying Saviour—by the authority of the everlasting God, I entreat you brethren, to wake up to this awful voice of heaven, to these wailings of a world lying in wickedness.

J. B. WATERBURY, D.D.

THE CHRISTIAN GUIDED TO HEAVEN.

Exodus xxiii. 20.—“*Behold I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*”

THE sojourn of the Israelites in the desert, is often referred to in the history of the Church as an emblem of

the pilgrimage of Christians in their way to heaven. Their trials and tribulations were numerous; and their march was frequently opposed by the nations around them. In this respect, their case exhibits a sample of the changes and dangers to which the redeemed of the Lord in their way to Zion above are still exposed. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," was the prophetic warning our Lord gave His disciples on the eve of His departure to the Father. Although in our sheltered circumstances, the unholy arm of persecution for conscience sake is held in check, and we are not called to suffer the spoiling of our goods, the apostolic testimony that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," is not wholly abnegated. Fair as the face may be, which the world shews towards Christianity, the heart of man is unchanged; and the spread of knowledge and the salutary restraints of law,—not the love of God, and faith in Christ—keep him from overt acts of aggression with respect to the decided and faithful servants of God. There is however no cause of alarm. The Divine Being who has called them by His grace has said—"Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee by the right hand of my righteousness."

In pursuing our reflections on this subject, we remark.

1. *The Christian has a faithful guide.* The children of Israel were not left to tread the desert alone; they had an angelic conductor. In various ways the promise in the text was fulfilled. The blessed God who had brought the people out of Egypt by a strong hand, raised up Moses and Aaron to go before them, and to encourage them in the winding and untrodden paths which they had to travel. He also provided a column of smoke by day, and a pillar of fire by night, to conduct them through their hazardous march to the place which He had prepared for them. Nor is He less concerned to provide for the Christian's journey to the heavenly Canaan. The blessed Redeemer—called

the Angel of the Covenant—has undertaken to lead His pilgrims through this mortal life. He has already travelled the road, knows all its difficulties and dangers, its sorrows and its temptations, and is at once by experience, sympathy and power, eminently qualified to bring them safely home. The influence of the Holy Spirit combined with the teachings of the Divine Word, and the presence of an unseen yet Almighty Friend, render him safe. Thus guided, he marches onward, often, it may be, perplexed, yet hoping against hope, and thus persevering to the close, he receives the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.

2. *The Christian has an all-sufficient guard.* In a dangerous road, a *guide* may not be all that is necessary to the security of the traveller. He may need a *protector* as well. And the Christian has both. "The Lord God is a sun and a shield" to him. He fought all the battles for Israel. He overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the sea. He led forth the people from their bondage and brought them to the place prepared for them. He was their angel-captain; and vain were the arm of might, the councils of the crafty, or the rush of armed legions against His unseen agency. And all that He was to the Israelites, He is now to every pilgrim on the way to Zion: and they who put their trust in Him shall never be confounded. When the king of Assyria encompassed the Lord's prophet in Dathan with chariots and horses and a numerous host, his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do? And Elisha answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." So the issue proved. The Christian's guard is numerous and mighty. The forms of the heavenly ones, invisible to mortal eyes, crowd around the path of the just. They watch over their charge in every step, and never slumber or sleep. No change of circumstances, poverty or pain, weal or woe, changes their regards, nor lessens the interest they take in the travellers under their care. The Christian is moreover

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supported by the arm of his Redeemer. Though all the powers of darkness should be leagued against him, he need fear no evil. What human or satanic foe can compete with the Almighty? What mountain billows but He can stay? Can He not hush the wild uproar of contending elements, and change, in an instant, blustering winds into zephyrs, soft as the balmy air of unblighted Eden? Well therefore may we sing—

“A thousand savage beasts of prey
Through all the desert roam,
But Judah's lion guards the way,
And guides the travellers home.”

3. He who guides and guards, *also provides*. The history of the Israelites in the wilderness is an emblem of this truth. The people were hungry, and manna was rained from heaven for their supply. They were thirsty, and water issued from the smitten rock to slake their burning and parched lips. *That* rock prefigured Christ. His body was stricken, and from thence issued those living waters that make glad the city of our God. The Lord has provided a generous feast—a feast of fat things, for all hungry souls. The table is spread and the invitation given. There is no spot on His footstool, it matters not how barren or dreary or uncultivated, but the dews of heavenly grace are ready to descend upon the two or three who gather together in the name of Christ. For the relief and succour of His people, the Lord has opened springs in the desert, and beautified many an arid plain with the flowers of paradise. All along the king's highway, cast up for the redeemed, are refreshing shades, and crystal fountains, and trees of life, and bending branches of invigorating fruit, to comfort and cheer the weary pilgrim in his toilsome journey to his final home. Angels are his ministering spirits to keep him in the way; to animate and encourage him till he hears the trumpet of victory proclaiming the termination of his war-

fare, and exchanges his mortal coil for the wardrobe of the skies.

4. The Christian traveller *is not journeying in an unknown road*. When the Israelites fled from Egypt, they entered on a strange, and to them an untrodden path. No monuments rose to their view to point out their course, or to cheer them along by the records of those who had gone before them. No encouragements like these were presented to their minds as they stood trembling between the sea before them, and the pursuing army in their rear. But He who made a way for their redemption from the slavery of Egypt, bade them go forward; they did so, and their deliverance was complete. To the Christian now, the case is otherwise. The path has been travelled by myriads for upwards of 1800 years; and He who has conducted them to the land of promise, will keep those who commit their eternal interests to His faithful care. Thanks be to God, we are not like one that beats the air. We are not trying an experiment. We have the glorious example of the bravest and the best to encourage us—kings and warriors—princes and statesmen—poets and philosophers—who have entered the same path, submitted themselves to the same guide, borne patiently the same reproaches, and experienced the same supports. “Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith.”

This subject suggests many encouraging reflections. Christians may reap a large harvest of consolation from the imagery of the text. “Ye feeble saints fresh courage take.” Your every step is attended by an angel—the angel of the covenant: unseen to the natural eye, He is yet near to guide and keep you. His love passeth the friendship of earth. His presence will be with you when you pass through the river to the land of Beulah, where all is

glory ineffably bright, every sorrow hushed, and every woe fled for ever !

The wide spread "sacramental host" of the church gathers all its confidence from this unsealed fountain of endless consolation. Look for a moment at the attitude and phases of the redeemed church of God. Now, perhaps, in tears, in dust, trodden down by the oppressor, and stained with her own blood: to-morrow she shines like some glorious one, and the kings of the earth tremble before her. To-day, in mourning over the tomb of her Lord: to-morrow, singing the song of victory over the empty sepulchre. To-day, a seemingly feeble band, against which proud words of scorn are levelled; to-morrow, a host with banners streaming under the canopy of heaven, freighting every breeze with more than mortal music. Well might the seer, who for gold would fain have cursed Israel, exclaim — "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel !"

But there is yet something beyond this. Change, sorrow, and death, invaded the earthly Canaan, but the "bright world to which we go," the place prepared by sovereign love, is invaded by no woe, no battle, no change. Countless angels throwing open the gates, and pouring forth songs, sweeter than earth ever heard, summon the believer home to his Father and his God !

J. N. MAFFITT.

THE WORK OF GOD.

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John vi. 28, 29.—"*Then said they unto Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*"

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In these words we have an important question and a plain answer: the consideration of each respectively, will comprise the present discourse.

I. The question asked by the Jews "What must we do that we might work the works of God?" is one that may be asked at any time and in any place. There was nothing so peculiar in the circumstances in which it originated and was answered, as to make it less appropriate in a multitude of other cases. Some ask it listlessly, as if they cared not for an answer: and some with deep anxiety, wishing to know how they may please God, and obtain eternal life.

There are, doubtless, many shades of difference in the temper and views of persons who propose the enquiry. And from this variety arises a corresponding difference in the sincerity and earnestness with which it is made. More or less in all men, the voice of conscience speaks of a law and a lawgiver, of a judgment, and of future retribution. And the wicked man who is deterred by the warning of the monitor in his breast from the commission of some sins though not from others, goes just so far in endeavouring to work the works of God, as may silence the upbraidings of a restless spirit.

But there are other ways in which the stress of this necessity to work the works of God is more visibly betrayed. They not only ask the question, but they actually undertake to answer it practically. One man imagines that the works of God are to be performed by the members of the body—the hands, the knees, the lips. A prayer, a genuflexion, an oblation in and of themselves, by some intrinsic efficacy of their own, or by some magical effort wrought by them, he supposes will secure the divine favour and his own salvation. This error not only prevails extensively among the heathen, but it exists among Mahommedans and Jews, and under the corrupted forms of Christianity, and even in connexion with its purest forms; where outward services, no matter what, are confounded with the essence of religion. And where this error prevails among those who have the Scriptures to guide them, it is in the nature of things far more culpable and far more ruinous, than when it

nestles in the dark, or gropes its way in the twilight. But wherever found, it always tends, either to blind men to destruction, or force them to own that they have not gained what they need—satisfaction and peace.

Others there are who substitute moral for ceremonial acts. They undertake to work the works of God, by deeds of virtue, especially such as are like to awaken the notice, and secure the admiration and sympathy of mankind. Hence the constant disposition to make social charities, almsgiving, and every other exercise of mutual benevolence the supreme if not the sole test of character. And hence it likewise is, that we frequently hear of men, who though notoriously guilty of great sins, are nevertheless rated as a kind of *irreligious saints*, on account of what is called their goodness of heart. Be it so. The applauses of the world cannot entirely prevent their seeing, that however good their works may be in one sense, they are wholly insufficient in another: and after all their efforts, the good they have attempted shrinks to nothing in comparison with that which they have left undone; and with the positive evil they have committed. And with this conviction the troubled spirit is wont to repeat the question to itself—"What shall I do that I may work the works of God?"

This may be regarded as the highest ground that man ever reaches by a light of his own kindling. His next move is downward. After a vain attempt at reformation and repentance in his own strength, he descends to the lower ground of meritorious abstinence and self-mortification—from repentance to penance—from the humbling of the soul to the humbling of the body—from inward sorrow to sackcloth and ashes—from fruitless efforts to abstain from what is evil, to real abstinence from what is not. Unable to appease conscience by renouncing sinful pleasures, he will now try to do it by renouncing innocent enjoyments. Because the man has tried in vain to do what is commanded, he would retrieve the failure by doing what is not com-

manded at all. This is the secret of that complicated system of will-worship and voluntary humility which has slain its thousands of misguided souls. There is yet another phase of this error. As the individual finds that he cannot work the works of God himself, the Church or the Priest shall do it for him. He remains quiescent, and endeavours to be satisfied with the transfer of his personal responsibility to his ecclesiastical confessor. He thinks he is safe because he is within the pale of priestly guidance, and has by gold, or in some other way, secured an interest in the merits of the church, and is therefore no longer required to work the works of God himself. He has covenanted with another to do it for him, and on this dreadful delusion he reposes.

II. My brethren, I do not think it necessary to say one single word in condemnation of this most prevalent and fearful error. Common as it is in what is called the religious world, you, I hope, are free from the taint. You have been taught, that no ecclesiastical connexion can save your soul, or deliver you from the necessity of personal, inwrought, and vital godliness. Come then with me to the only oracle, from which a satisfactory answer can be expected.

To the Jews who proposed the question, Jesus answered, —“this is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” The whole point of this answer lies in the contrast between working and believing. Their minds were full of work. They would probably not have been startled had our Lord enjoined upon them any task however difficult, provided that by doing it they might have claimed to work the works of God. To a thoroughly self-righteous spirit, danger, pain, obstacles are all inducements rather than dissuatives. This has been a thousand times over exemplified in the extraordinary austerities and self-inflicted torments of devotees. And the same cause might doubtless have produced the same effects upon some of our Lord's

contemporaries. Had he told them to lacerate their flesh, or to give the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls, they might have obeyed without a murmur. But a command to believe, and to believe on Him, was something altogether different. The belief required comprehended faith in His divine mission, a simple trust in Him for eternal salvation, and a free and full consent to be saved by Him.

There was nothing abstruse, complex, or difficult in this. Yet its very simplicity created all the hostility in the minds of the inquirers. They had asked for work, for something to be wrought out by themselves. In reply, He told them to believe; and that not as something over and above the works they demanded, but instead of them. In words as plain as words can be, He says, "This is itself the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent."

The same spirit of dislike and aversion, which many of the Jews manifested, is still a common element of the human heart. To be saved by faith, seems to cast contempt upon the efforts men are willing to make in their own strength and at their own cost. What! are all their tears and fasts and vigils—all this doing and abstaining—all this action and suffering, to go for nothing? After spending a whole life time to work out my salvation, must I be told at last that I have only to believe? Even so; for while we are to shew our faith by our works, our best obedience falls very short of fulfilling the law, and has no merit to entitle us to the kingdom of heaven.

The true meaning of our Lord's words, in their obvious acceptation, and as interpreted by other Scriptures, may be briefly summed up under two particulars. The *first* is, our restoration to the favour of God is entirely independent of all merit or obedience on our part. Let this be distinctly understood. Neither the act of faith, nor any other act, nor all our acts and abstinences put together, can contribute

in the least to our acceptance with Heaven, as the procuring cause of our salvation. The impossibility of such a thing, constitutes the absolute necessity of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Man as a sinner, is unable to make atonement, to meet this desperate emergency. God sent his Son to take our place, to obey the law for us and bear the penalty annexed to its violation. The saving benefit of this great substitution is freely offered to us in the Gospel; and unre-served reliance upon Christ and not upon ourselves or any other creature, still is, and still will be, till the day of grace is past for ever, the work of God, by which we are to attain eternal life.

But *secondly*, let it be never forgotten, that the efficacy of Christ's atonement, reaches not to those who live in wilful sin. God's design in making this provision for our happiness, was not to set aside the law, but to honour it. He does not save men *in* sin, but *from* sin; and when belief in Christ is represented as the saving work which God requires, it is not to the exclusion of good works in those who shall be saved, but rather as the source from which they are to flow, and as evidence that our faith is not dead and worthless. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then the rest will follow, not as the conditions of salvation, but as the fragrant flowers and delicious fruits of that prolific seed which at the moment of believing was implanted in the heart by the Almighty grace of God. To this—to all this, we are called by every invitation of the gospel. And if any among you are asking the question which the Jews put to our Lord, this is still the reply, that ye "believe on Him whom God hath sent."

J. A. ALEXANDER, D.D.

PREDICTION AND WARNING.

Matthew xxiv. 11—13.—“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

THE first and general reference of the wonderful events recorded in this chapter, is to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the Jewish polity, both civil and ecclesiastical. As our Lord takes His final leave of that splendid but desecrated edifice, He foretels its approaching demolition, and points out the signs of its coming to pass, with many of the incidents with which it would be attended. Among these He particularly mentions—the deceivers that would abound, pretending to be specially sent from heaven as Christ himself—the wars and rumours of wars which should shake the nation to its very centre—famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, which should be but the beginning of sorrows. Added to these, his servants should be delivered up to councils—thrust into prisons, and brought before rulers and kings for the sake of their Lord—that in consequence of such outrages and persecution, many should stumble and apostatize from the faith; and those who were merely professors of His name, when they became apostates, would betray those who really loved Him. All this was fulfilled to the very letter, in the history of the earliest Christians; and has been in all ages. By the Pagan and Heathen powers, multitudes for the crime of being Christians, and for nothing else, have been put to death. And troops of faithful martyrs have been persecuted unto death under the charge of heresy, by a proud

and intolerant and idolatrous hierachy, because they preferred to obey the word of God rather than the decrees and traditions of conclaves and councils. Sadly has the religion of Christ, which is a religion of purity and love, been thus misunderstood and debased : and awfully has the hatred of man's unholy heart, been arrayed against it. Deep and deadly has been the virulence with which it has been opposed and persecuted ; and not one jot or tittle of our Lord's prediction, has fallen to the ground unfulfilled.

It was His invariable practice, to make every topic on which He discoursed of practical and personal use to His hearers. Hence to discussion He added warning, caution, the voice of precept and duty. He therefore tells them that false prophets would arise, whose specious artifices would deceive many ; that because iniquity—cruelty, oppression, and injustice would prevail, many would grow cold in their love to Him and the truth ; but that he who should endure to the end of his life—who should bear afflictions faithfully for His sake, and never shrink from the cross, should finally win the crown. In the meantime, God will be their Protector and Friend. St. Luke, referring to this same discourse of our Lord, says—"there shall not a hair of the head perish." The expression is proverbial, and is used to denote the certainty and completeness of the salvation of all who perseveringly adhere to the Saviour. And he further adds, as the words of Christ—"In your patience possess ye your souls—that is, keep your minds patient, it will be of immense service to you, in those trying times to which I refer, and which will surely come upon you. The prediction that some would forsake the faith and grow cold in their love to the Redeemer, would be likely to create uneasiness in their minds. For the comfort, therefore, of those to whom He was speaking, and for every sincere follower who might hereafter be severely tried, He immediately subjoins the assurance—"He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

In applying this promise to our own times and circumstances, it may perhaps be imagined that we are not likely to meet with the same temptations as the early converts, or with any equal to them in duration or severity. It is true that there were peculiar dangers and difficulties attending the first planting of Christianity. But however a kind Providence may spare us from such bitter sufferings, we must "rejoice with trembling." The life of spiritual religion is at the best a warfare. However tranquilly we may be permitted to pursue our course, there will not be wanting much to try our faith, to tend to divert us from the narrow path, and to tempt us to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The text is a beacon to warn us of our danger. It conveys the idea, that from a diversity of causes, a Christian profession might be cast aside, and that notwithstanding persons may for a time run well, yet that afterwards they may fall away, and finally sink into apostacy. Our own hearts often confirm this doctrine, and many faithful Christians have trembled at the thought of being thus self-deceivers. Who is there that is not conscious of occasional declensions? Who is there that is never overtaken in a fault, either of sin or unbelief? Doubtless there is a great difference between such defections and open apostacy; but yet the one may lead to the other, and indeed, but for the preventing grace of God, would always do so. The one is the bud of the same bitter tree, of which the other is the fatal and ripened fruit. A man may for a season depart from the right way, and be brought back like David and Peter; but it is also possible that he may be left to stifle convictions which he ought to cherish; and thus become involved in error and sin, so that his last state is worse than the first. The only safety, therefore, is to be on our guard against the small beginnings — the slight deviations which are too often unnoticed, and often unsuspected. The first step in any course is generally that which decides its final direction. The youth that yields to one

temptation, will in all probability yield to another and another, till he becomes the victim of sin, and the dupe of lusts that war against the peace and the salvation of his soul. The hardened and convicted felon was once, perhaps, under the power of influences which had they been cherished, would have kept him from the paths of the destroyer. It is the same with error. In its naked form it disgusts rather than attracts. Truth is always lovely; and it always accords with the instincts of unsophisticated nature. But error generally assails the mind in a disguised and specious dress; and attended with allurements which find a ready ally in the cravings of a perverted heart. It is not that it is more beautiful than truth, but it allows of actions congenial to the innate sentiments of fallen humanity, soothing to the restlessness of a spirit ill at ease with itself, and gratifying to the moral taste of a nature that has no higher standard of excellence than its own propensities and passions. Many have been thus borne down by the ebbing tide into the deadly whirlpool of sensual indulgence, and finally wrecked in the maelstrom of infidelity.

The *grounds* on which our Lord enforces the necessity of caution, are deserving our serious attention. His language implies that there is danger. The promise of salvation to the steadfast and enduring Christian carries with it the palpable intimation that we are surrounded by circumstances which are likely to have a fatal influence upon our progress, our integrity, our continuance in the cause righteousness and pure religion. His language suggests that our principles are imperilled, our faith exposed, our perseverances jeopardized, our eternal happiness endangered. And He therefore, with that warm benevolence which ever glowed in His heart towards the family of man, and with that fidelity which distinguished all His discourses, tells us, that we shall be tried, that our courage and fortitude will be submitted to the severest ordeal, that our regard to Him will be subjected to the most searching

scrutiny, and that he, and only he, who shall stand the process, shall be finally saved.

The first ground on which the solemn intimation is put before us, is *persecution*. Unlike the plausible impostor who always conceals the shady side of his fraud, our Lord directly, and in language that no one can mistake, told His followers what they would have to endure in His service. He spoke more frequently of the cross than of the crown; of the privations than the possessions; of the self-denial that He required in His, than of the pleasures they would enjoy. If He were a deceiver, He was the most strange and extraordinary deceiver that ever existed. No course could be less likely to gain adherents, to win converts, to make proselytes, than that which He adopted. He told the world that He was poor—that He was without an earthly home—that whoever followed Him must expect the same treatment as He received from mankind in general; and that although there was a kingdom provided for His friends, it was unseen, that they must die to inherit it; and that in the meantime, they must be content to suffer persecution, injustice, reproach, and every degree of scorn and cruelty which malice can devise, and official power inflict. Strange method this, of imposing a cheat upon the world! And that He should succeed to the degree He did in propagating a fraud, is if it were a fraud, the greatest moral miracle the world has ever witnessed. In the preceding context, He states that such a season of persecution would come, and that many would be offended. It would be a stumbling stone, a rock of offence in their way. Man likes a smooth path, and His was rough. Man likes the sunny smile of the world, and the portion of Himself and His servants, would in general be its frowns. Man likes a present recompence, but that which He would give, would be principally future. Man likes the largest amount of ease at the smallest cost, but the path of the disciple was to be one of toil, often of reproach; and he may have long to wait before the day of repose shall

come. No wonder then, when the villa in arm of malignant power kindled the fires of persecution, some should have denied the faith. Daily experience proves, that the smallest fraction of the injuries to which the primitive servants of Christ were exposed, is quite sufficient to turn multitudes away from the good old paths. A jeer — a menace — the fear of losing a morsel of bread — will be enough to induce many professed religionists, to forsake the Saviour who died to redeem them; and to embrace opinions and fall into practices pleasing to the sense, but “not after Christ.”

The second note of alarm which the Saviour gives, is the *deceptiveness of error*. Where persecution does not drive, false doctrine may allure. False prophets, who may come in sheep's clothing, the Great Teacher tells us, shall arise, and deceive many. This has been the case from the beginning of Christianity — perhaps from the earliest ages of revealed religion; and the present day is no exception. It is unquestionably one of the chief dangers of our time in Protestant Britain. Perversions of religious truth abound; and forms so plausible are set up and advocated, that in the words of Christ, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. In a state of society like that of our own land, where there is happily no “bill of pains and penalties” to fetter private judgment, or to restrict the free exercise of religious opinions, provided they make no infraction on the civil rights of mankind, it is not to be expected, that wholesale uniformity and perfect agreement in the circumstantialia of worship, will ever be found. There is a healthiness in the rivalry of contending parties, when both or all contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, in the spirit of the faith itself. In such a case, they are rank and file, differently accoutred, fighting under the same banner, against a common enemy. No man, however, ought to divide and separate for the sake of division and separation. It is only for the maintenance of some immutable and eternal prin-

ciple of Christ's religion, that can be admitted in justification. And where such a principle is involved, we must know no man after the flesh. When a doctrine of the everlasting gospel is at stake, we must call no man master. The words of the old philosopher, are never to be forgotten—"I love Plato, I love Socrates, but I love truth better than either." It is not the pressure from without—the peaceable, and pious, and evangelical sections of the religious world, from which the truth has aught to fear. It is the dreadful schism that rages within the pale of our Church, that awakens alarm. Errors which the nation abjured three hundred years ago are brought back, and clung to with strangely infatuated pertinacity. *Secession*, or more properly speaking, *Perversion*, confined for obvious reasons to one too congenial branch of the English Establishment, may have paused a little ; but *Seduction* in Jesuitical cunning, is awake and at work. Here and there some consecrated theatre, for exhibiting the dramatic mysteries of Rome, is ever and anon starting up. Antichrist tempts resort, enhancing the entertainment by pantomimic attractions and puerile devices ; and the fact is patent—that Protestants, professed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in all-sufficiency and finality of His written word, neither scruple nor pause, to give countenance to the spectacle, in which the Son of God is ostensibly worshipped, but in reality, rejected, mocked, and crucified anew !

There is yet a third ground on which danger is found. Many are led astray by the *love of the world*. Thus Demas forsook Paul, and preferred the present smile of the world to the crown of life. This, in our sheltered circumstances, is perhaps one of the most common stumbling blocks in the way of discipleship with Christ. There are persons of much private worth, of generous sentiments, of moral habits, and of unquestionable integrity, who have thoughtful moments, and favourable impressions towards the truth, but they cannot relinquish their connexion with the irre-

ligious, and the mammon of the world. They strive to serve two masters. If this were possible, they would decide at once; but as they cannot reconcile God and Mammon, they are still on the side of the latter. St. John speaks of *the pride of life* as one of the Christian's enemies. Hence thousands are led away by what is called rank and respectability from the fold of truth. David says—"The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." They must have something fashionable and gratifying to their vanity. The salvation of the soul, and all the fruits of the Spirit are the farthest from their minds. Some also are in danger from their peculiar temperaments; thus by means of the love of money, Annanias and Sapphira lied against God, and Judas betrayed his Master.

Such are some of the grounds of danger to which we are exposed. We cannot specify them all. Their name is Legion. The question is, how we may escape their fatal influence? And this question is of infinite concern to us all. Our everlasting state is involved in the inquiry. It is not how we may be able to live a day—a month—a year, in safety, health and peace; but how we may be able to secure an eternity of blessedness in the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy.

Provision is made for our final salvation: and He that giveth grace hath promised to give us glory. From the beginning to the end of our Christian course we can do nothing without His aid. It is by the Holy Spirit that our hearts are first renewed; and it is by the same Divine Spirit that we are strengthened and supported all through the subsequent stages of our spiritual sojourn. We must however, never forget, that the promise of God to keep us from falling, gives us no warrant to be indifferent or unconcerned about our walk and conduct. We have no absolute promise of salvation—no unconditional assurance of eternal life, apart from our own prayers, watchfulness, and reliance on Christ. Hence, the many cautions of Scripture. "Let

him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." All the promises of God which are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus," are connected with the means of grace. He who decrees the end, no less appoints the means by which it is to be secured.

One of the indispensable requirements to perseverance is the establishment of the heart in the things of God. We mean by this remark, that religion must be an affair of the inner man—A personal and individual matter. Vague notions on religious subjects are the ruin of thousands. We do not suppose that every man can understand the doctrines of Scripture with the same degree of light and accuracy; or be acquainted with them to the same extent. But why should not the humblest among us, who hears the gospel, and possesses the sacred volume, understand it as fully as men understand a trade or profession? If it be a shame for a mechanic not to be master of his trade or occupation, it is much more so for a professed Christian to be ignorant of the word of life. But his safety lies in having the love of God in his heart. He may have no learning, he may have a very limited capacity, or he may be blind, crippled, and neither able to go to hear the gospel, or be able to read it; but he may yet have, to use the similitude of Scripture, the root of the matter within him. It is the same with the soul as it is with the mind and body. Princes and kings—poor men and peasants—can neither eat, drink, or sleep by proxy. No man can do these for another. So in the higher concerns of religion. Each must attend to these for himself. Each must repent for himself. Each must believe for himself. Each must pray for himself. And it is this individual experience of the powers of the world to come, that stamps upon us the image and privileges of the children of God. The man thus moulded is a new man. Christ is his life and his pattern. He will take no saint from the calendar of any church for his model.

The man Christ Jesus is sufficient for him: he wants no other.

And if you would endure to the end, above all take the shield of faith. It is to this divine principle that all the moral victories of God's people are ascribed in Scripture. By this the long succession of ancient believers overcame the world. "Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Nothing could shake their integrity, or subdue their fortitude. They would not accept deliverance from the tortures of the rack, "that they might obtain a better resurrection." "And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." This is the great cloud of witnesses by which we are compassed about: and their faith in the promises of God bore them triumphantly through. Let their bright example stimulate us to endure to the end; and then like them we shall win the crown. Now to God, &c.

W. THORN.

THE END.

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